



半蔵の門 **PATH OF THE**
ASSASSIN

VOLUME 13

HATEFUL BURDEN

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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By **KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA**



*Lifelong Friends, with the Same Dreams,
Striving to Grow into a Rising River.*



DARK HORSE MANGA™

半蔵の門 PATH OF THE ASSASSIN

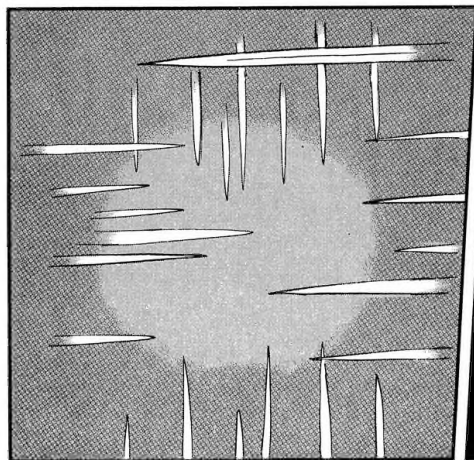
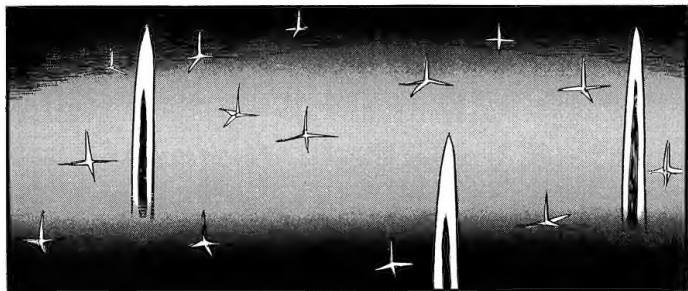
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Chapter On
Hikkyō Jici
No. 1:
Hateful
Burden
Part 2





I AM
NOT A
SUPPA
NOW.



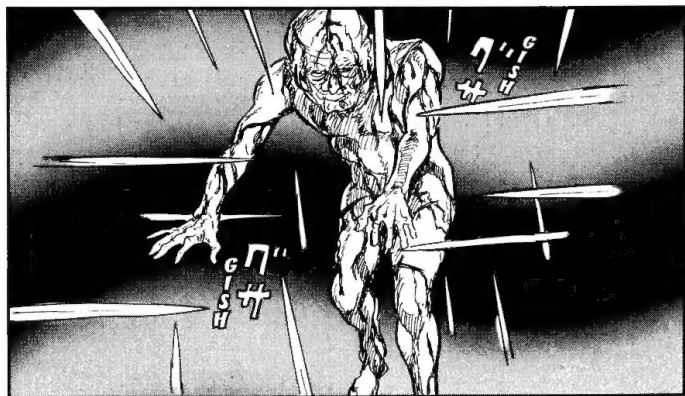
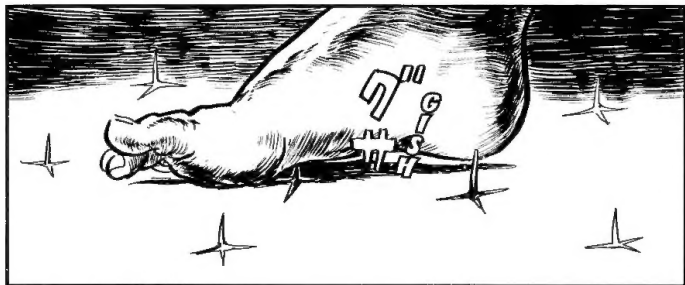
WITH A SUPPA'S
SHARP NIGHT VISION,
IT'S EASY ENOUGH
TO GET ACROSS
WITHOUT A SCRATCH.
BUT IF I DO, I'LL
EXPOSE MYSELF AS
A SUPPA.

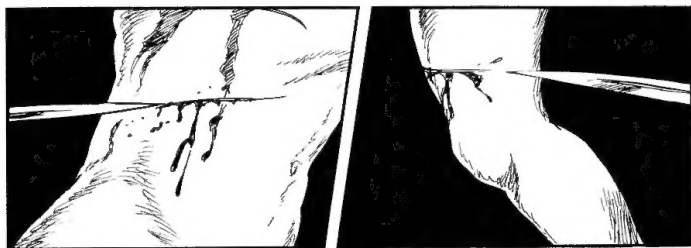
A TEST
FOR
UNMASKING
SUPPA...
HUH?

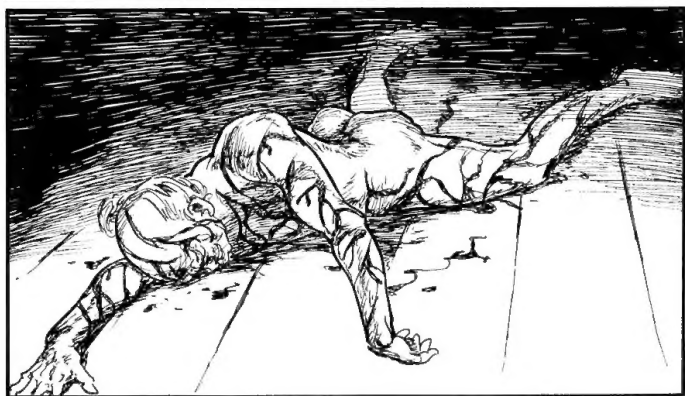


I'M AN OLD
MAN WHO
WANTS TO
DIE.











MAKE
HIM
BREATHE
NEMURI-
GUMO.



HE'S
STILL
ALIVE.



WE'VE
COMMITTED A
CRIME, IT SEEMS.
HE WASN'T A
SUPPA AFTER
ALL.



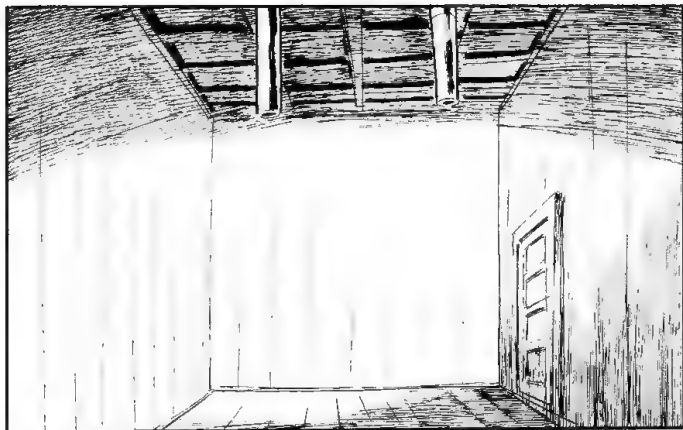
EVEN IF HE IS NO
MORE THAN AN OLD
MAN, HIS RESOLVE
IS GREATER THAN A
SAMURAI'S. BUT IF
HE IS A SUPPA, HE IS
A FORMIDABLE MAN, THE
LIKES OF WHICH ARE
UNPRECEDENTED. HE
IS EITHER HANZO OF
IGA OR JOSUKE OF
KOGA.

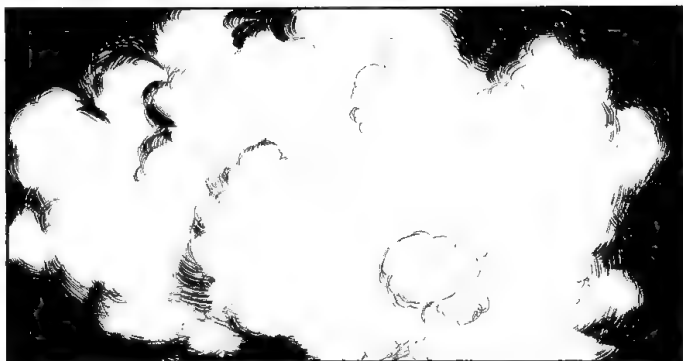
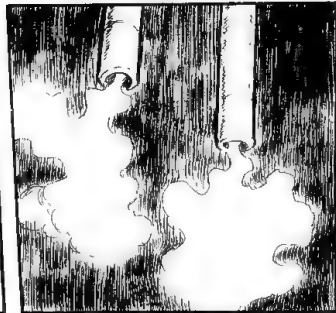
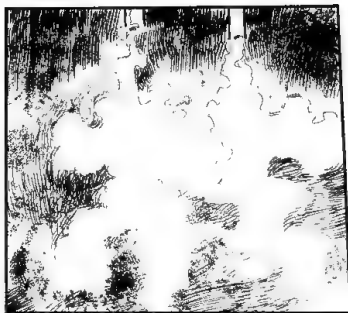
YOU'RE...
STILL
SUSPICIOUS
?!

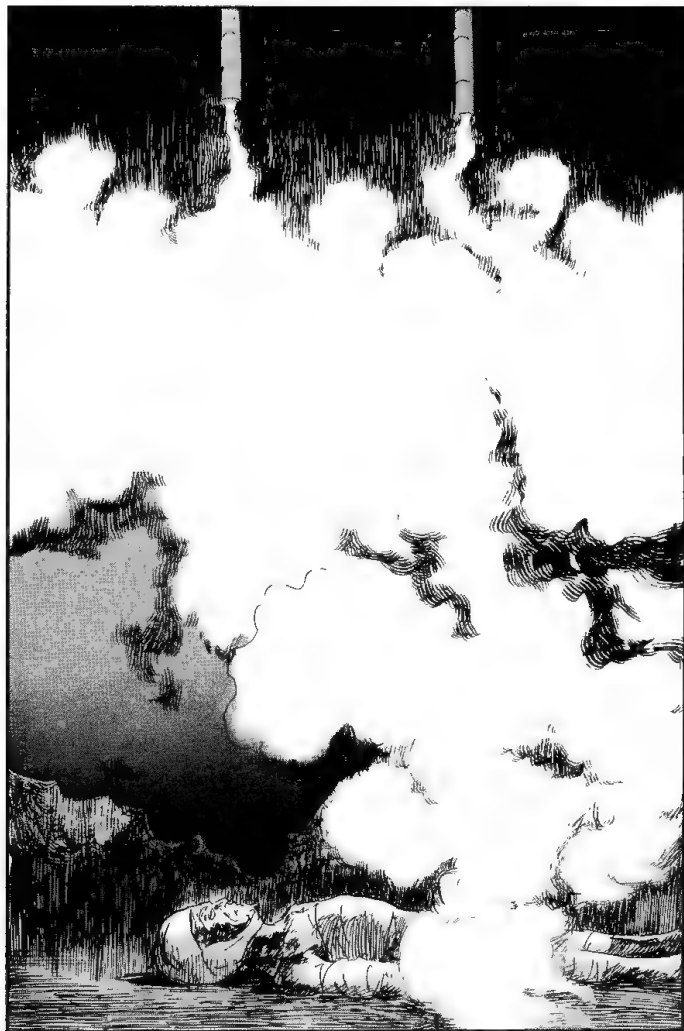


YES!

TREAT HIS
WOUNDS
AND BRING
HIM TO THE
NEMURI-
GUMO
CHAMBER.

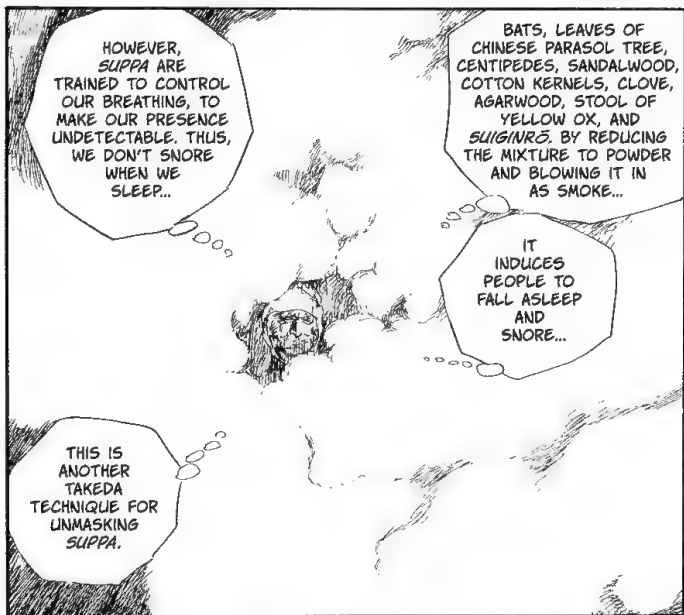








MMG...
NEMURI-
GUMO...
TESTING TO
SEE IF I'LL
SNORE?

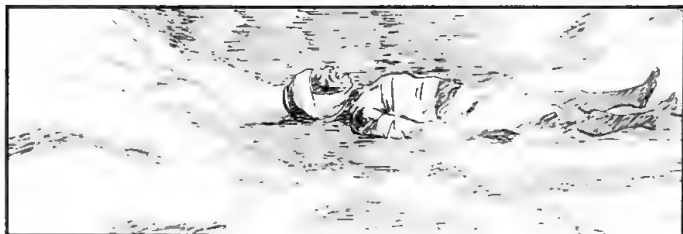


HOWEVER,
SUPPA ARE
TRAINED TO CONTROL
OUR BREATHING, TO
MAKE OUR PRESENCE
UNDETECTABLE. THUS,
WE DON'T SNORE
WHEN WE
SLEEP...

BATS, LEAVES OF
CHINESE PARASOL TREE,
CENTIPEDES, SANDALWOOD,
COTTON KERNELS, CLOVE,
AGARWOOD, STOOL OF
YELLOW OX, AND
SUIGINRS. BY REDUCING
THE MIXTURE TO POWDER
AND BLOWING IT IN
AS SMOKE...

IT
INDUCES
PEOPLE TO
FALL ASLEEP
AND
SNORE...

THIS IS
ANOTHER
TAKEDA
TECHNIQUE FOR
UNMASKING
SUPPA.



WHEN PEOPLE FALL ASLEEP, THEIR JAW MUSCLES RELAX. THAT'S WHY THE JAW DROPS AND THE MOUTH OPENS. THE TONGUE ALSO SLUMPS BACK, NARROWING THE AIRWAY.



HOW LOUD HE SNORES!



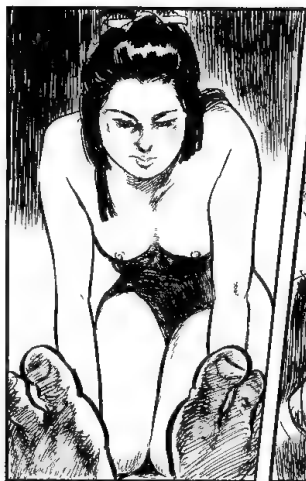
ONCE THE MOUTH OPENS WIDE, MORE AIR PASSES THROUGH THE MOUTH THAN THE NOSE. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, THE SOFT PALATE VIBRATES, MAKING PEOPLE SNORE.



WE WERE WRONG ABOUT HIM, TARŌZA-SAMA.



STARTING FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, SUPPA ARE TRAINED TO SLEEP WITHOUT OPENING THEIR MOUTHS SO AS NOT TO SNORE. WE MASTER IT FULLY.









WHY?
WHY DO
YOU
SCORN
ME SO?

I SEE A
CONTEMPTUOUS
GLEAM IN
YOUR
EYES.



FLOWERS
DO NOT USE
HENCHMEN.
FLOWERS DO
NOT TEST
PEOPLE.

FLOWERS
DO NOT
CARRY
SWORDS.



WHEN I SEE A FLOWER-
LIKE BEING, ITS BEAUTY
MAKES ME SAD. WHEN I
SEE A WOMAN-LIKE BEING,
I SCORN HER BECAUSE
THE RESEMBLANCE
IS FAKE AFTER
ALL.



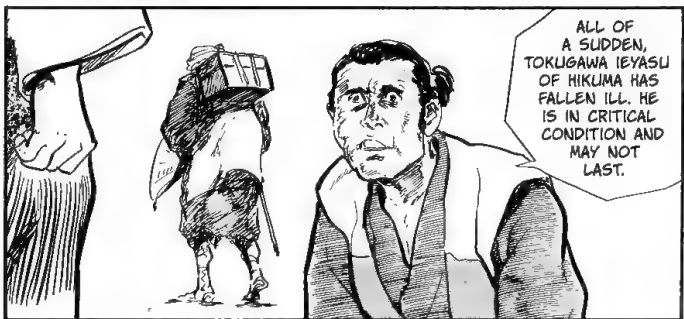


HOW
AM I
SUPPOSED
TO LIVE
NOW...?

AFTER
HURTING ME
ALL OVER
MY BODY,
YOU'RE
THROWING
ME OUT?

HMPH!







IF YOU PITY
ME AT ALL,
YOU'D GIVE ME
FOOD AND
SHELTER UNTIL
I HEAL!



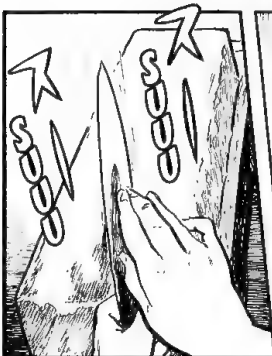
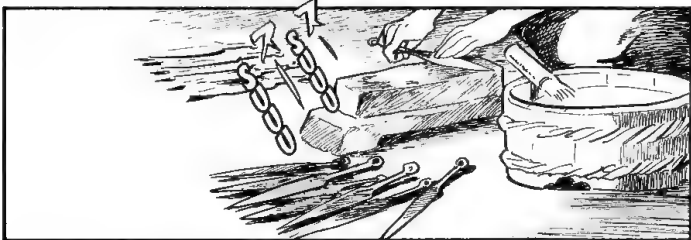
ARRGH. IT
HURTS! HURTS SO
BAD! YOU
MURDERERS!!

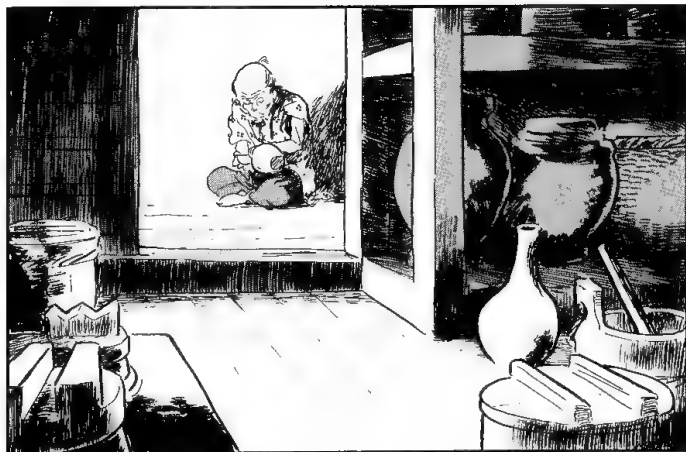


I'LL HAVE
YOU DO
CHORES
FOR ME.
HO HO
HO.

FINE.
I'LL LET
YOU
STAY.









...IS
STILL...

MILORD'S
LUCK IN
BATTLE
ALSO...



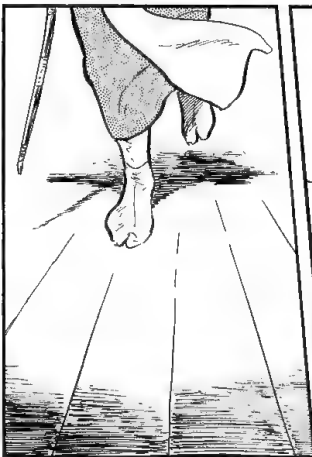
I MUST BECOME
A COMPLETE
SLOTH WHO DRINKS
ALL THE TIME
AND IS COMPLETELY
WORTHLESS
NO MATTER WHAT
THEY DO.

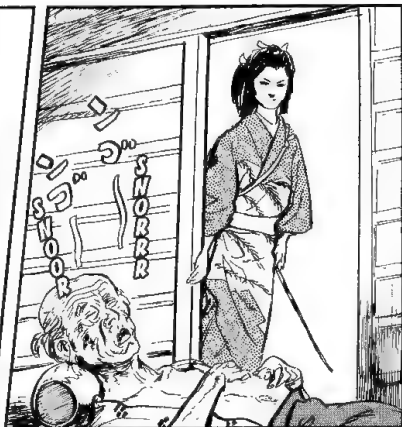
BUT THINGS
WILL ONLY
GET MORE
DIFFICULT.

IF I WORK TOO
HARD, THEY'LL
BE SUSPICIOUS.
FOR ME TO
GAIN TARŌZA'S
TRUST...





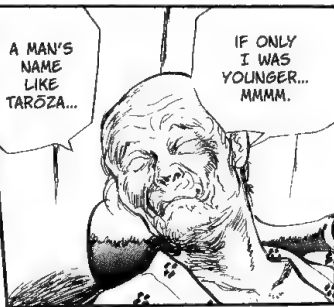






A MAN'S
NAME
LIKE
TARŌZA...

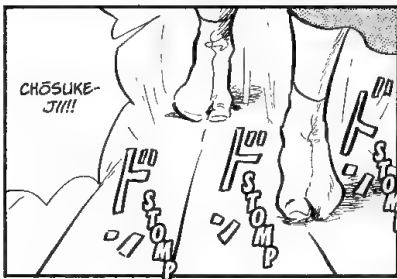
IF ONLY
I WAS
YOUNGER...
MMMM.



WHY...A PRETTY
WOMAN LIKE
HER...MMMM.

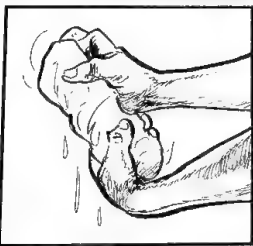


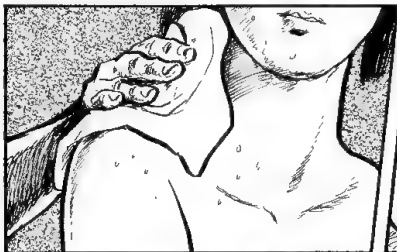
CHŌSUKU-
JI!!!

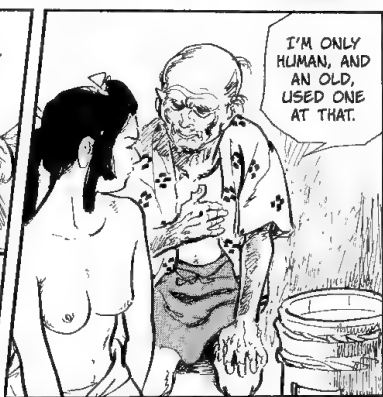


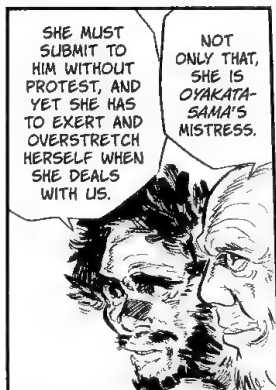
WAZZ







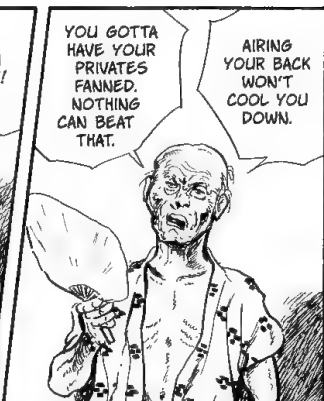






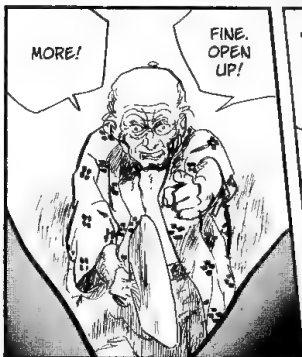


THEN
DO IT!



YOU GOTTA
HAVE YOUR
PRIVATES
FANNED.
NOTHING
CAN BEAT
THAT.

AIRING
YOUR BACK
WON'T
COOL YOU
DOWN.



MORE!

FINE.
OPEN
UP!



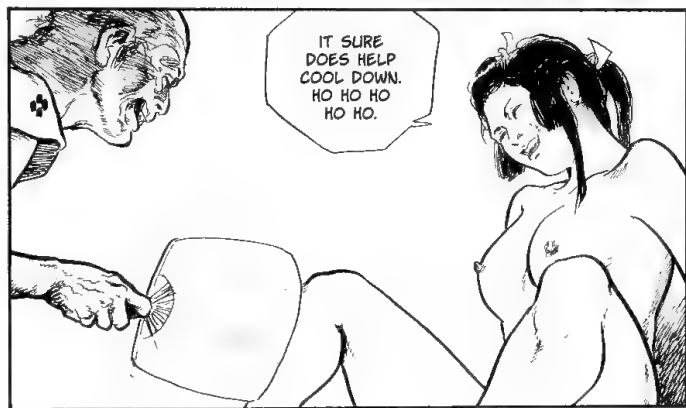
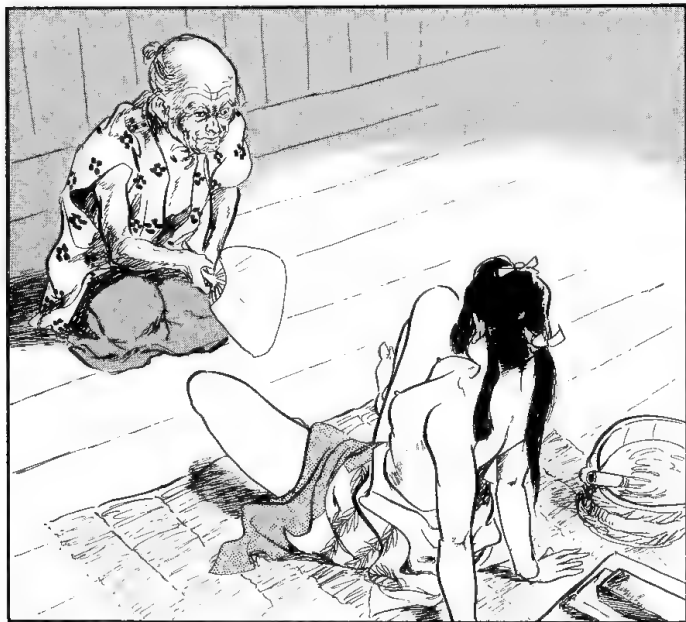
YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO
BROUGHT
IT UP!

THAT'S
TOO
MUCH!



HO HO
HO HO.

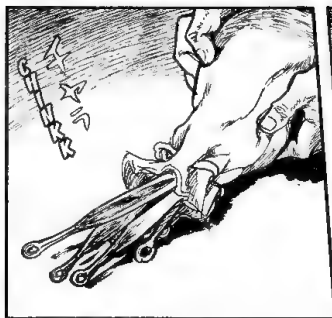
WHAT A
WAY TO
TALK TO
YOUR
MASTER!



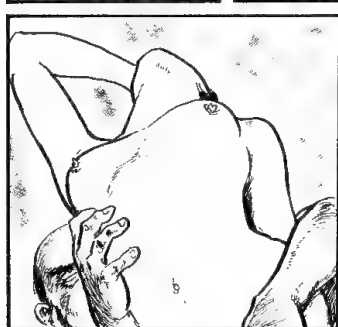
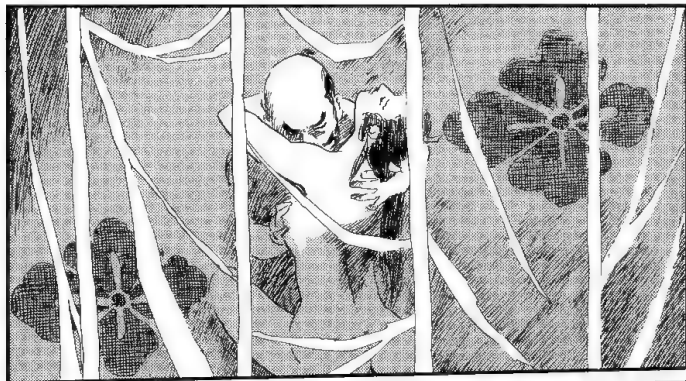


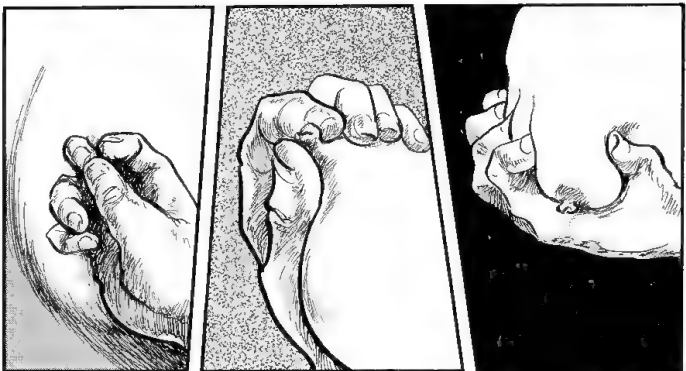
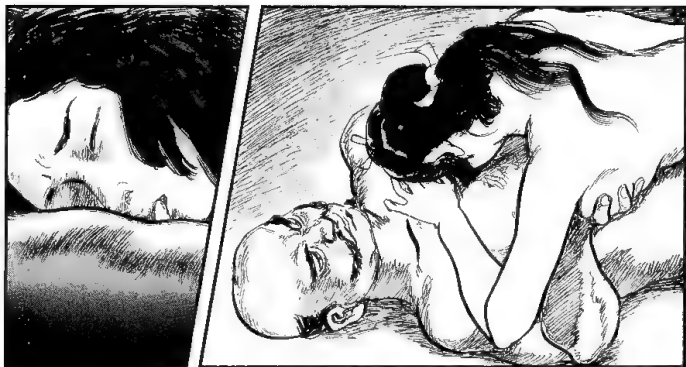


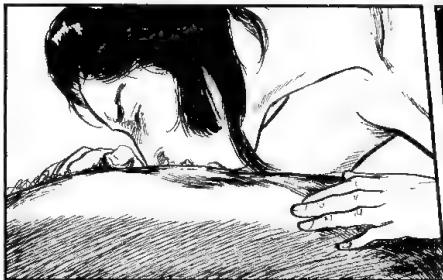














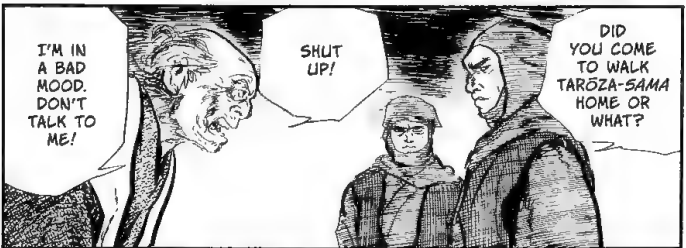
CHÔSUKE-
JI,
THAT
YOU?



I'M IN
A BAD
MOOD.
DON'T
TALK TO
ME!

SHUT
UP!

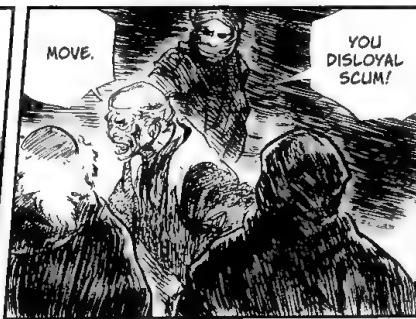
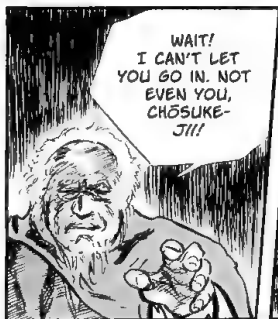
DID
YOU COME
TO WALK
TARÔZA-SAMA
HOME OR
WHAT?

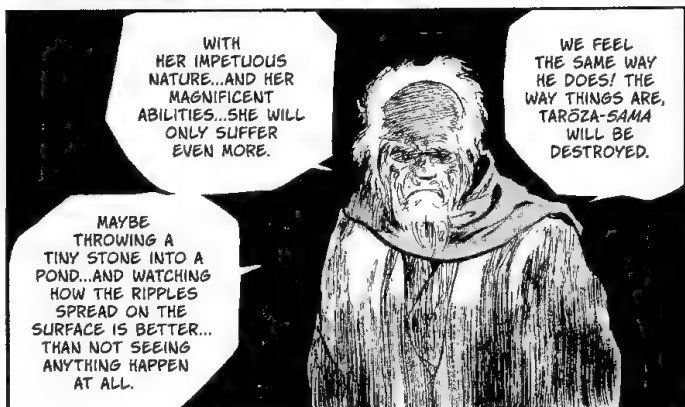


HEH
HEH.

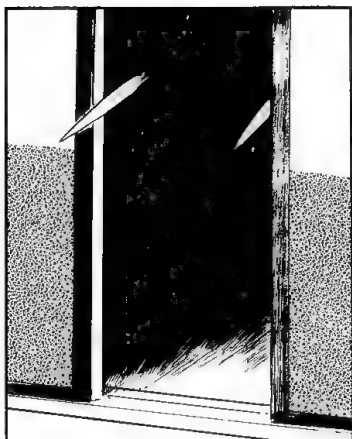
SHEESH.

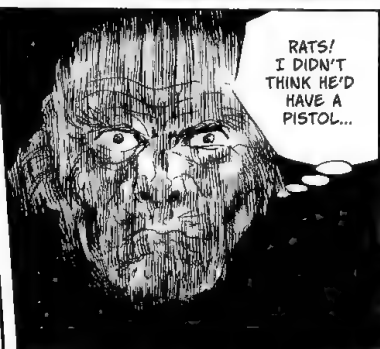
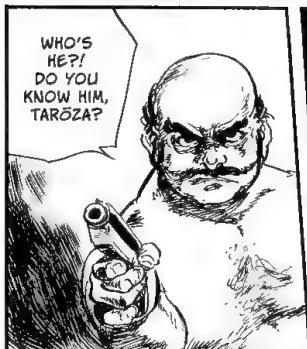


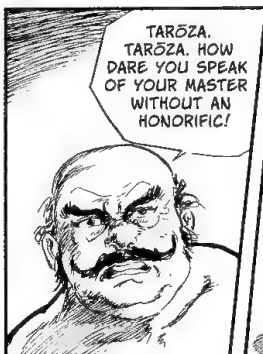


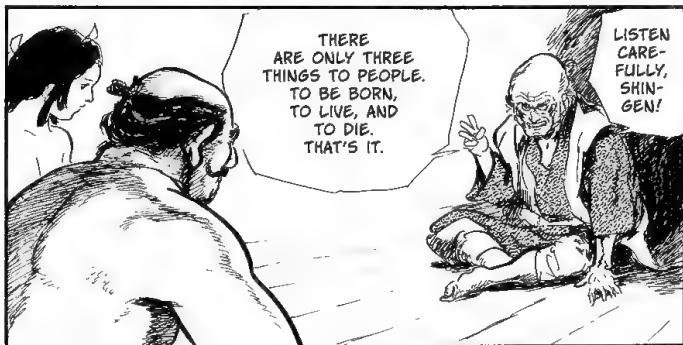
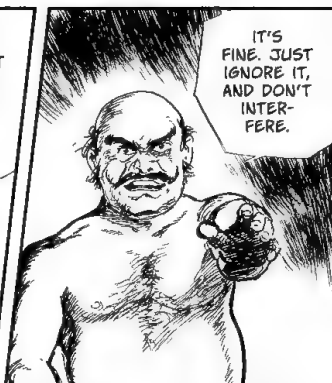
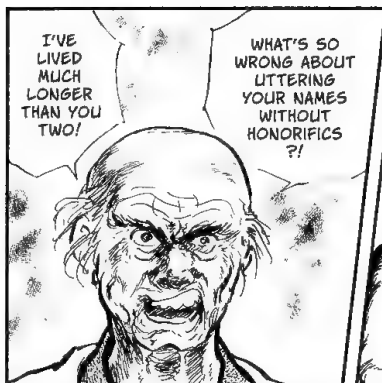


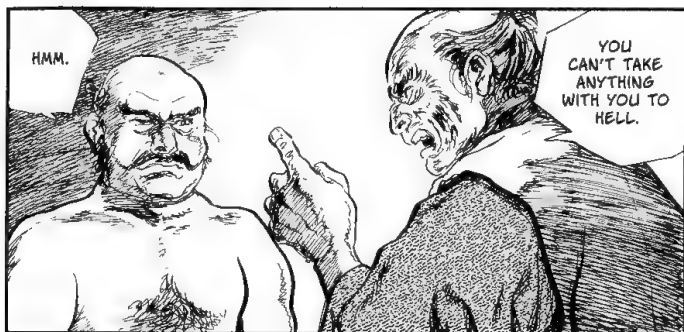














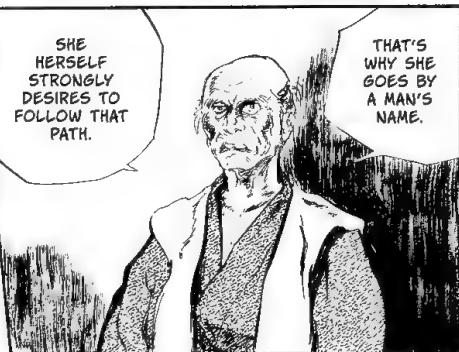
PLEASE
TREAT
HER ONLY
AS THE
HEAD OF
SUPPA.

PLEASE
DO NOT
MAKE TARŌZA-
SAMA SLEEP
WITH YOU
ANYMORE.



TARŌZA-
SAMA IS
IN POSITION TO
SERVE YOU AS
A MAN, AS THE
LEADER OF THE
SUPPA.

WHY?



SHE
HERSELF
STRONGLY
DESIRES TO
FOLLOW THAT
PATH.

THAT'S
WHY SHE
GOES BY
A MAN'S
NAME.

SHOULD SHE BE
A MAN OR A WOMAN?
THE QUESTION
TROUBLES HER AND
HINDERS HER FROM
EXERCISING HER
GREAT ABILITY,
WHICH LEAVES HER
DEPRESSED.

S
AND
SH
SUM
F
WITH
HER
SE

A
RAS
IN
SE
I

BUT WHEN
SHE TRIES TO ACT
AND THINK LIKE A MAN,
SHINGEN-SAMA, YOU
SUMMON HER AND ORDER
HER TO HAVE SEX
WITH YOU, WHICH FORCES
HER TO RECOGNIZE THAT
SHE IS, ULTIMATELY,
A WOMAN.

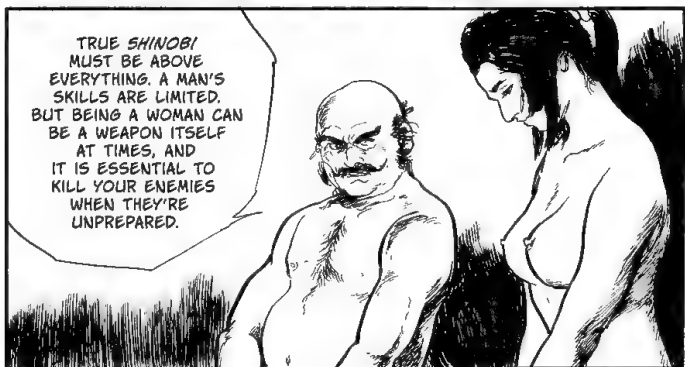
SHE'S
ALSO EMBAR-
RASSED, WONDER-
ING WHAT HER
SUBORDINATES
MUST THINK
OF HER.

DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE WASTING A GREAT TREASURE HERE? SHINGEN-SAMA, THERE ARE TONS OF OTHER WOMEN AROUND.



IT ONLY
SUITS HER
AS THE HEAD OF
SUPPA TO BE
ACKNOWLEDGED
AS A
TEMPTRESS AND
AN IDENTITY-
SHIFTER.

BEHAVES
LIKE A MAN
AND YET STILL
A WOMAN.
STRONG AND
YET VOLUP-
TUOUS AND
BEAUTIFUL!



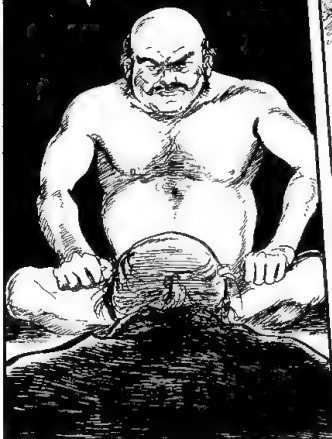
TRUE SHINOBI
MUST BE ABOVE
EVERYTHING. A MAN'S
SKILLS ARE LIMITED.
BUT BEING A WOMAN CAN
BE A WEAPON ITSELF
AT TIMES, AND
IT IS ESSENTIAL TO
KILL YOUR ENEMIES
WHEN THEY'RE
UNPREPARED.

AS THE
KANJI CHARACTER
SUGGESTS, A
SHINOBI IS ONE
WHO ENDURES BY
HOLDING A BLADE
IN ONE'S
HEART!

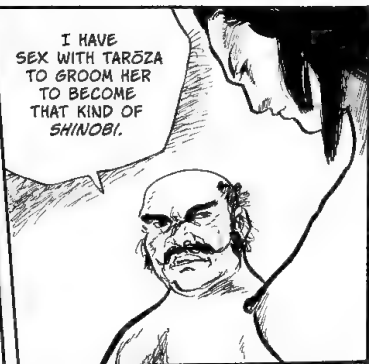
A CRISIS
CAN BE
AVERTED
THROUGH
SEX,
TOO.



YOUR REASONING
IS NO MORE
THAN SKIN DEEP.
YOUR ARGUMENT
HAS NO
BASIS.

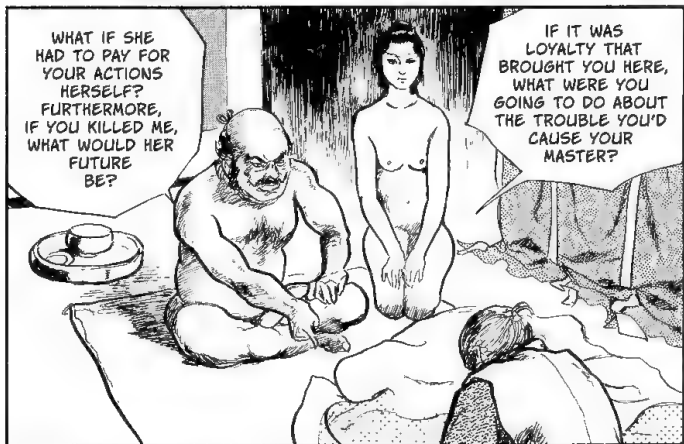
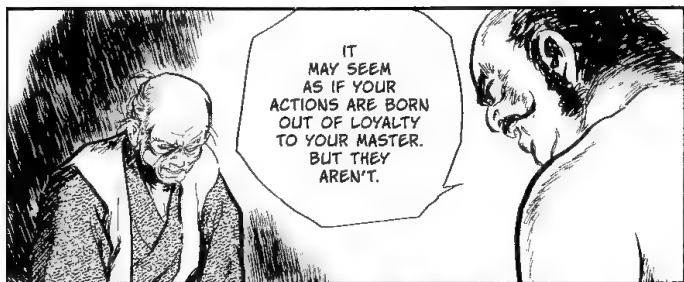


I HAVE
SEX WITH TARŌZA
TO GROOM HER
TO BECOME
THAT KIND OF
SHINOBI.



NOW,
CHŌSUKE!









I GET A
HARD-ON,
YOU
KNOW.

BUT EVERY
NOW AND THEN,
WHEN I THINK
OF HOW YOU
MIGHT BE
SCREWING
HER...

MINE
DOESN'T
WORK LIKE
A MAN'S
ANYMORE.







BUT IF SHINGEN
IS INDEED A MAN
WITH NO EQUAL IN
THIS WORLD, HE
MIGHT UNDERSTAND
WHAT I'M TRYING
TO SAY, I
THOUGHT.



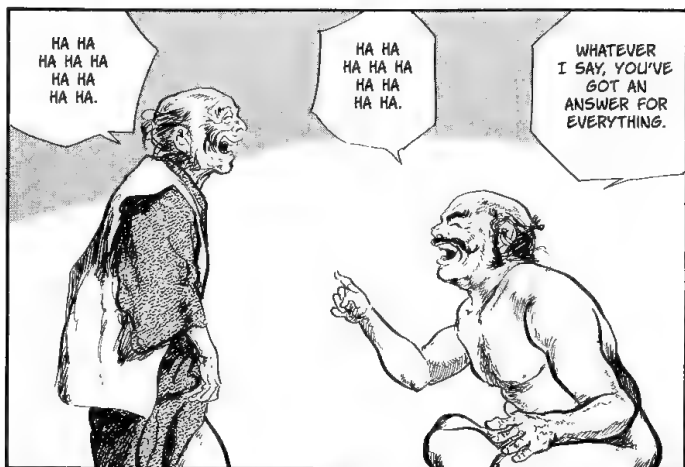
WHAT A
DARING
OLD
MAN!

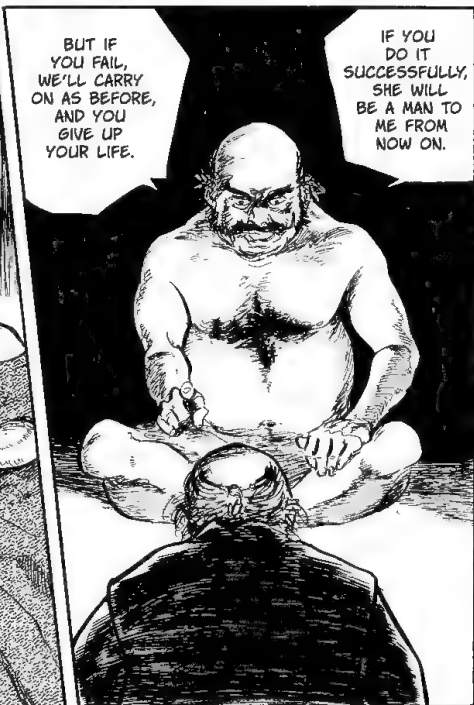
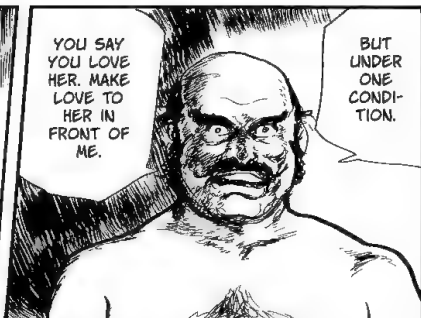


HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA
HA HA.

HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA
HA HA.

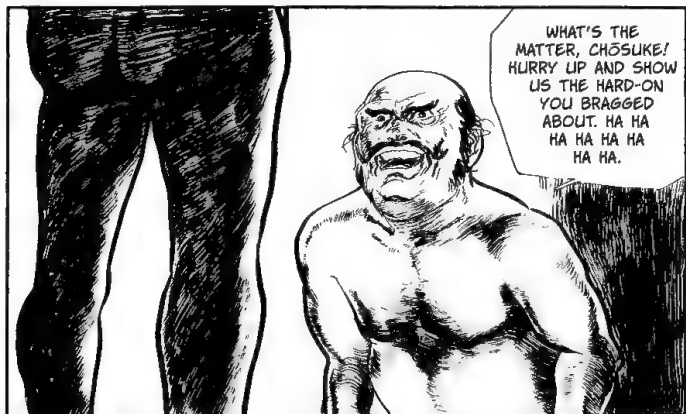
HA HA
HA HA HA.
WHAT A
FUNNY
GUY.

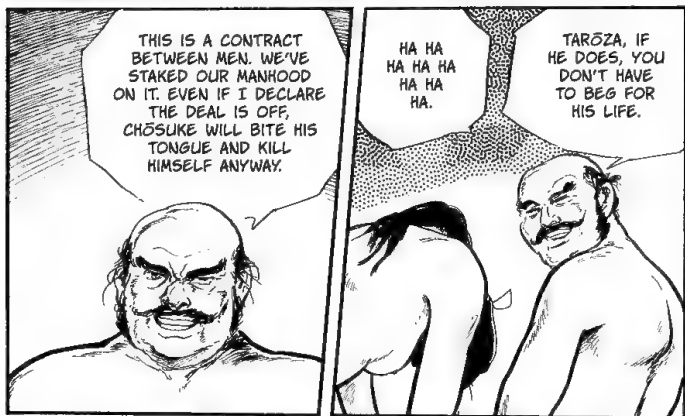


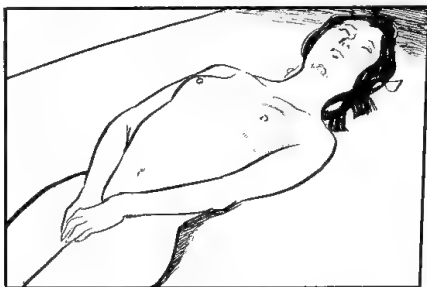


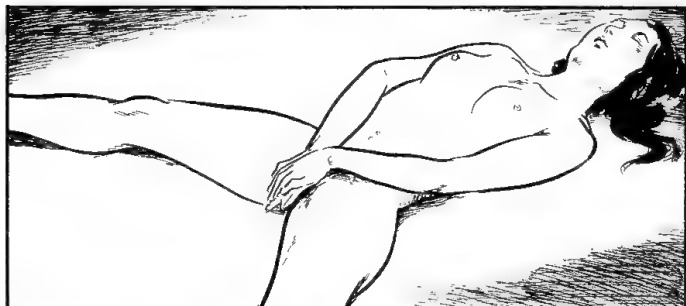
















HANZO'S GOAL
WAS TO KILL
SHINGEN. HE
WAS LOOKING
TO FIND AN
OPENING
EVEN THEN.

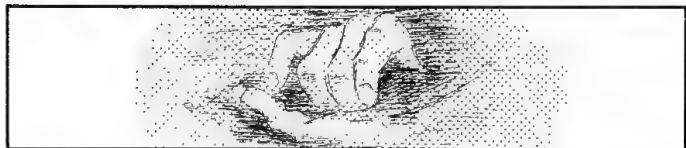
SHIT!!

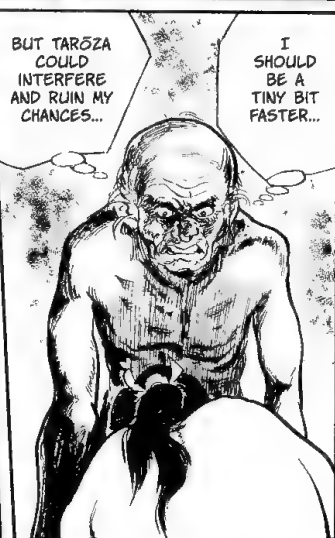
CRAP!



THAT'S WHY
HE FELT NO
LUST FOR
TARŌZA.
SINCE HE
HAD NO
DESIRE TO
HAVE SEX,
THERE WAS
NO RUSH OF
BLOOD TO
MAKE HIM
STIFF.











THE MOMENT HANZŌ GAVE UP THE THOUGHT OF KILLING SHINGEN THAT NIGHT, TARŌZA'S TEARS TOUCHED HIS HEART.

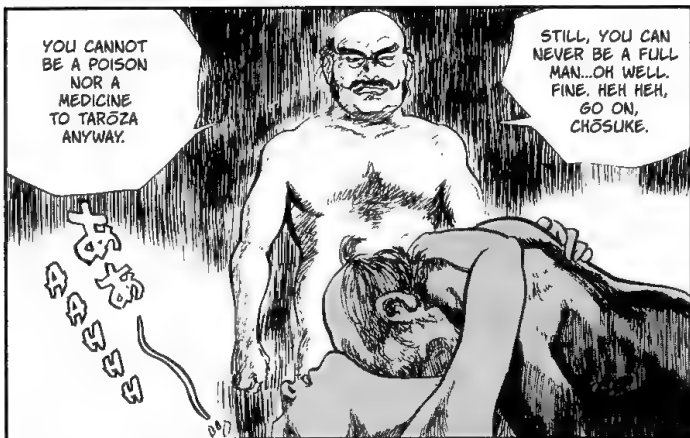


WHEN HE
REALIZED THE
WOMAN LOVED
HIM...HANZŌ'S
BLOOD BEGAN
TO BOIL.

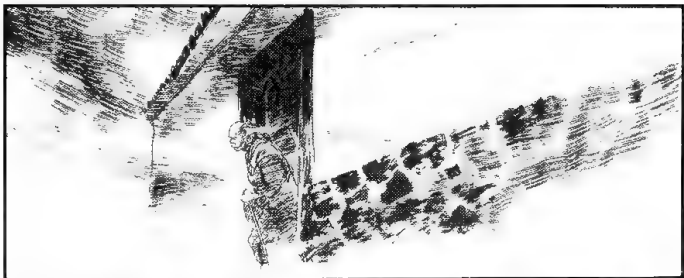
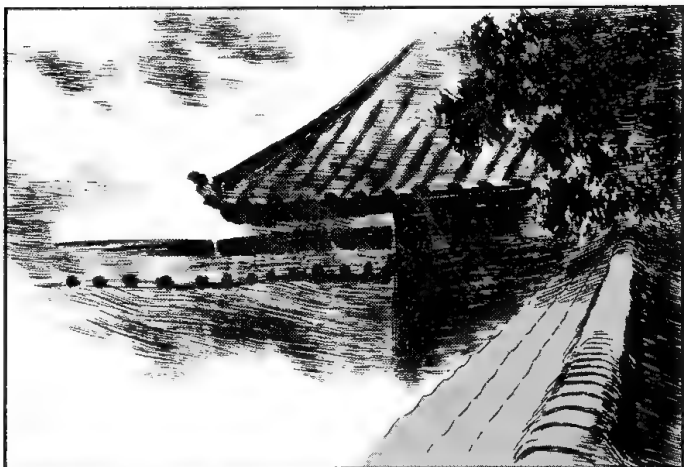


MMG.











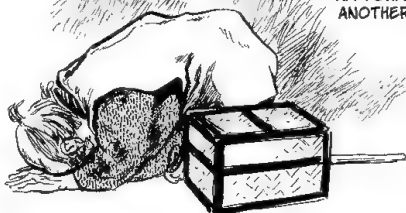


BUT UNLESS I
TERMINATE SHINGEN,
MIKAWA WILL PERISH
AND MY MASTER WILL
HAVE NO FUTURE.
I THREW AWAY
EVERYTHING JUST
TO LIVE AS A LOYAL
VASSAL. PLEASE
UNDERSTAND HOW
I'M SUFFERING
FOR IT.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME,
TARŌZA-DONO.
I PLAYED WITH YOUR
HEART IN DISGUISE.
EVEN THOUGH ALL IS
FAIR IN THIS TIME
OF WARRING STATES,
AND EVEN THOUGH
IT'S THE WAY OF
SUPPA, WHAT I DID
IS UNPARDONABLE.



I'M DOING THIS
ONLY BECAUSE I
WANT TO ENTER
EVEN DEEPER INTO
YOUR HEART...BUT
IT TROUBLES ME,
BECAUSE I DO
LOVE YOU...



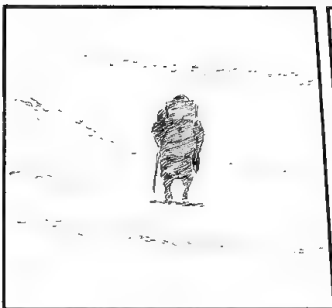
I'M CERTAIN
YOU WILL COME
AFTER ME, AND
KNOWING THAT, I
AM FORMULATING
ANOTHER PLOT...



PLEASE
FORGIVE
ME...

I INTEND
TO DIE BY
YOUR HAND
SOMEDAY.
UNTIL THEN,
I MUST
LIVE AS A
FIEND AND
A BEAST...

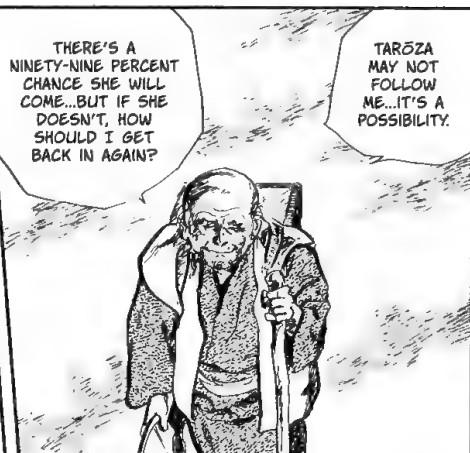








I WON'T
BE ABLE
TO USE AN
OBVIOUS
EXCUSE.

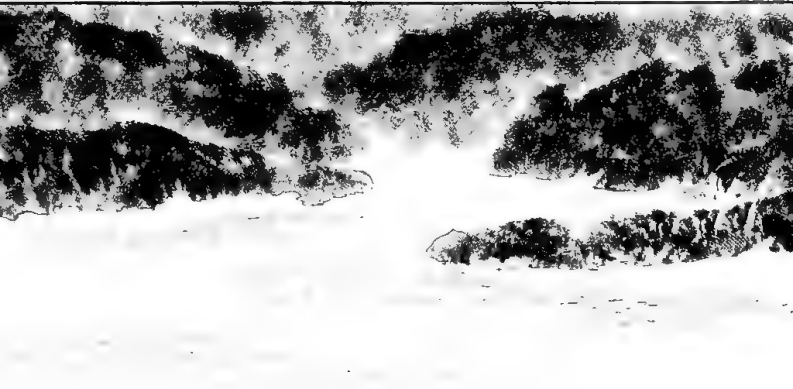


THERE'S A
NINETY-NINE PERCENT
CHANCE SHE WILL
COME...BUT IF SHE
DOESN'T, HOW
SHOULD I GET
BACK IN AGAIN?

TARŌZA
MAY NOT
FOLLOW
ME...IT'S A
POSSIBILITY.



AH,
HOW ABOUT
FLOATING
OVER THE
LAKE, HALF
DEAD.







ARE YOU
GOING
TO JUST
WATCH
HIM DIE?!

WHY DIDN'T
YOU STOP
HIM?!

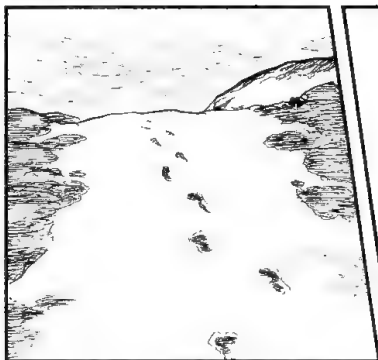


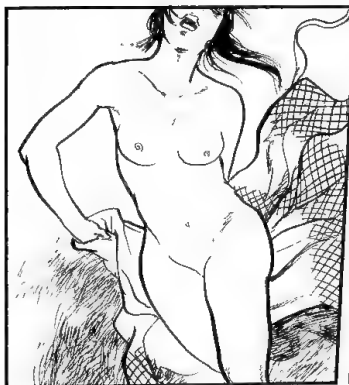
WHETHER TO BRING
HIM BACK, LET HIM
LEAVE OR DIE--THAT
IS WHAT YOU MUST
DECIDE AS THE
HEAD OF SUPPA.

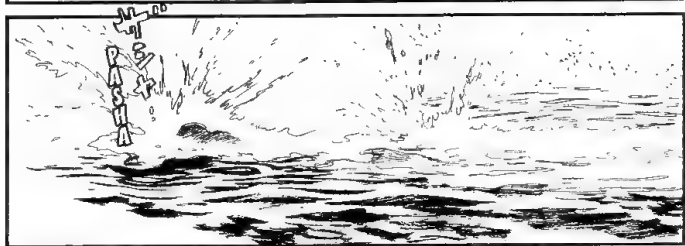
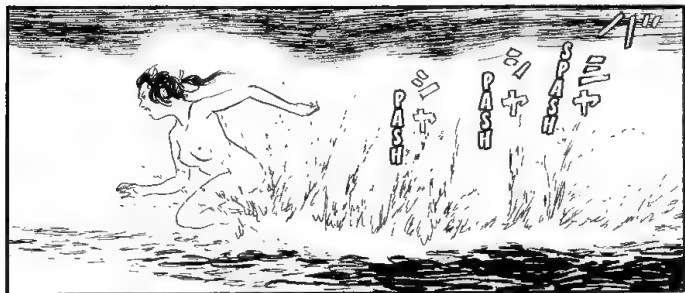
CHÔSUKE IS NOT A
SUPPA. WE THOUGHT
WE SHOULD NOT
MEDDLE WITH WHAT'S
BETWEEN YOU TWO.



SHE'S A
WOMAN IN
THE END.
THIS CAN'T
BE HELPED.



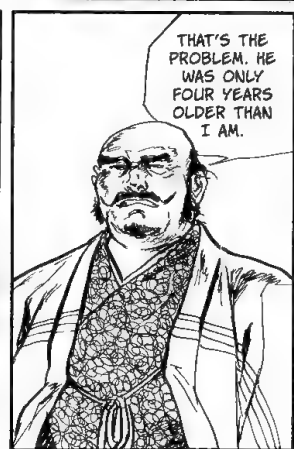
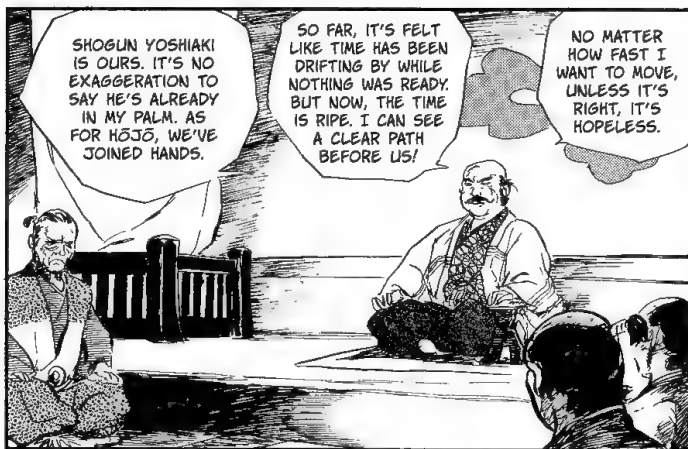
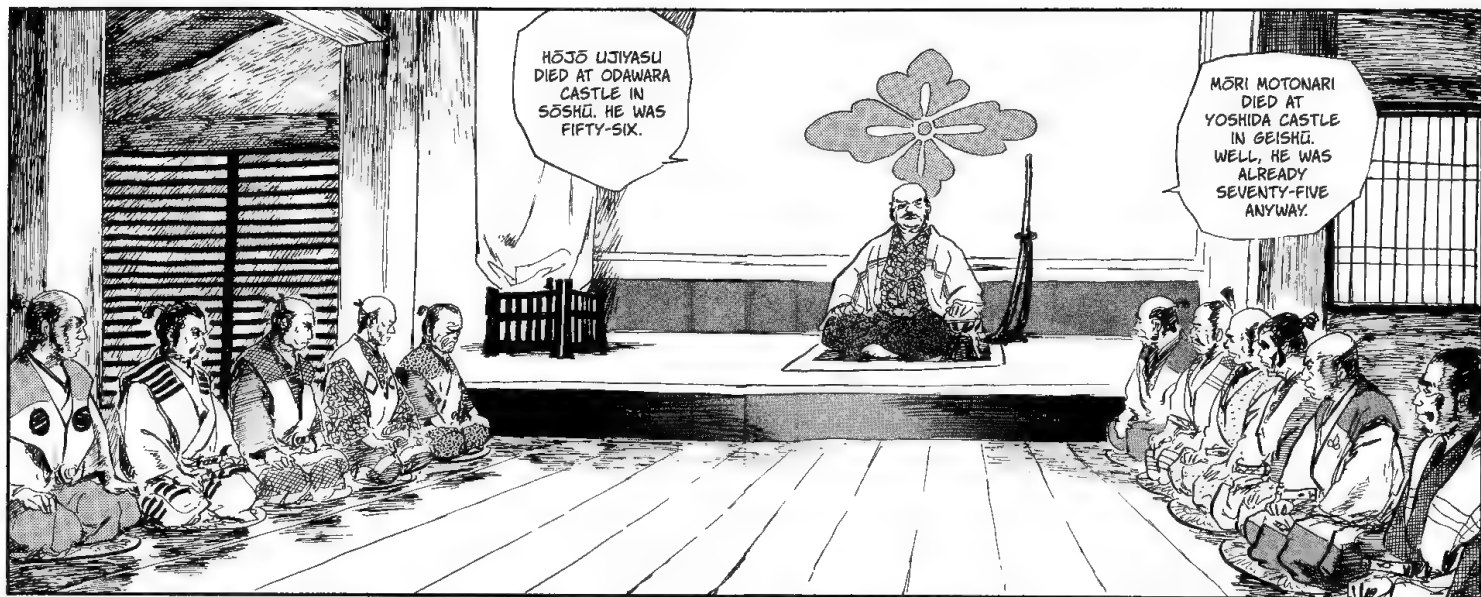




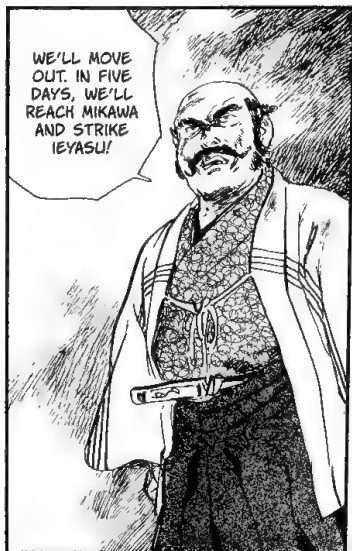


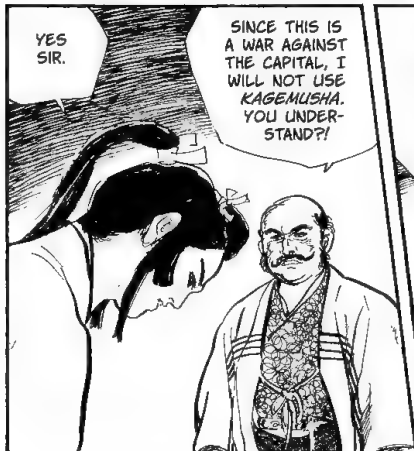


















IF I
DON'T KILL
HIM, MIKAWA
WILL BE
TRAMPLED
UNDER HIS
FEET.



COME
IN AND
WASH MY
BODY!

CHŌSUKE.



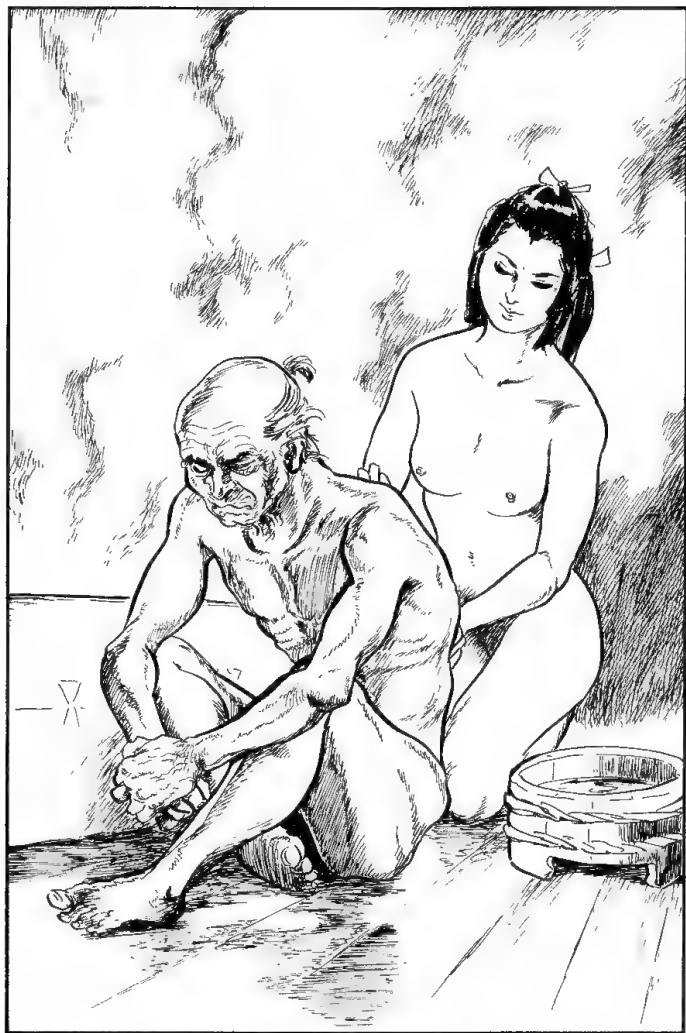
NO
MATTER WHAT
IT TAKES, I
MUST CLING
ON AND
STAY WITH
TARŌZA.



AND
AT THE
OPPORTUNE
MOMENT, I'LL
TERMINATE
SHINGEN.





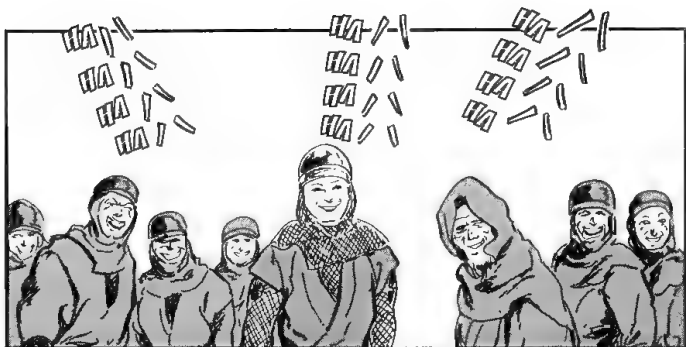


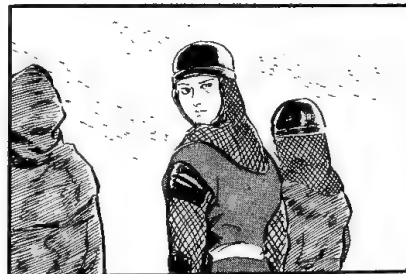
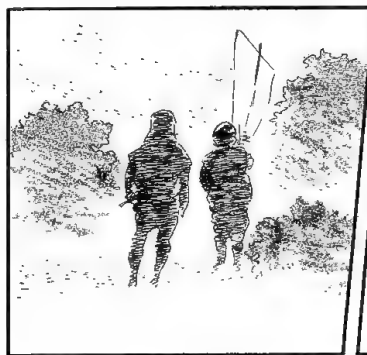




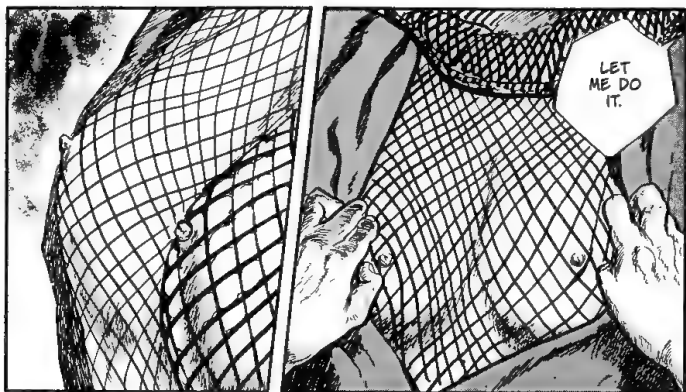


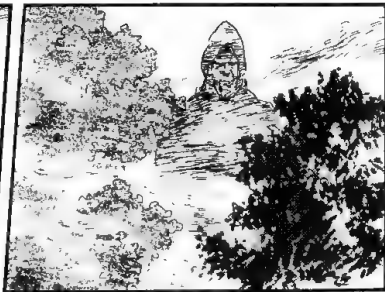
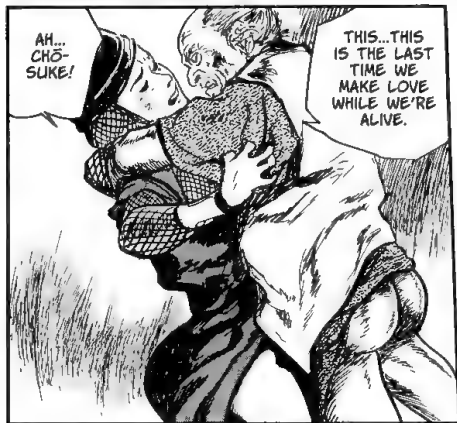


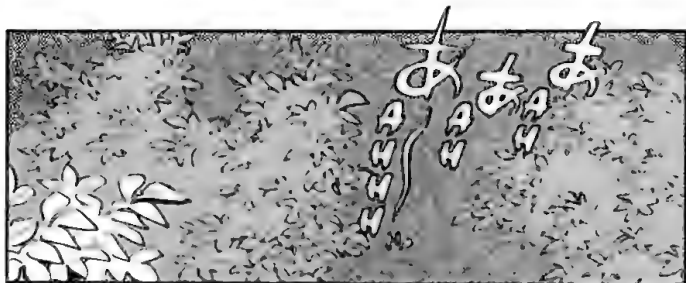




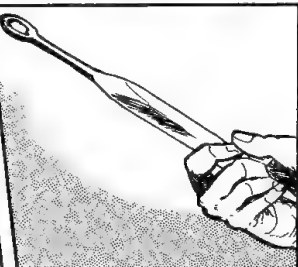
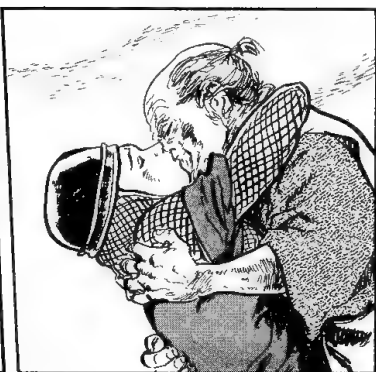
















THIS NEVER
HAPPENED BEFORE.
HER SENSES WERE
SO SHARP, SHE USED
TO MAKE OUR HAIR
STAND ON
END.

TARŌZA-SAMA
DID NOT
NOTICE I
WAS HIDING
NEARBY.



BUT
NOW,
SHE'S
INEFFECTIVE.

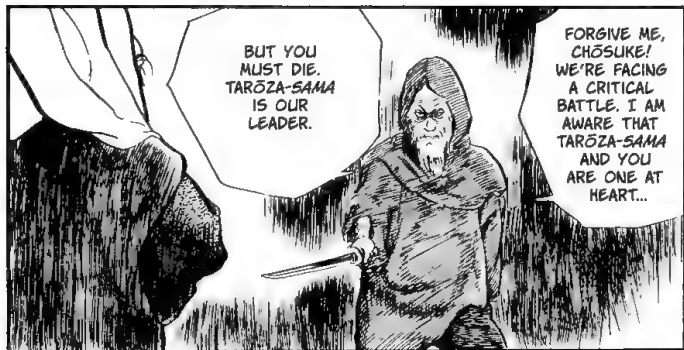


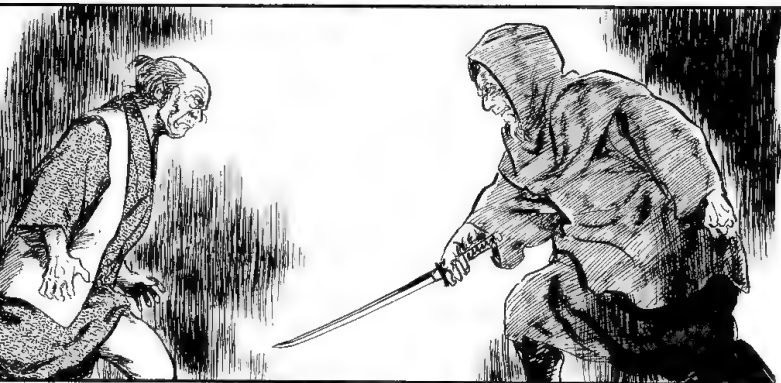
BUT TARŌZA-
SAMA DID
NOT NOTICE
MY
PRESENCE.



I THOUGHT I'D
TURN A BLIND EYE.
EVEN IF YOU CLAMPED
YOUR BODIES
TOGETHER AND MADE
LOVE TWO OR
THREE TIMES, I
THOUGHT I'D LET
YOU BE.

IF SHE
NOTICED
ME...



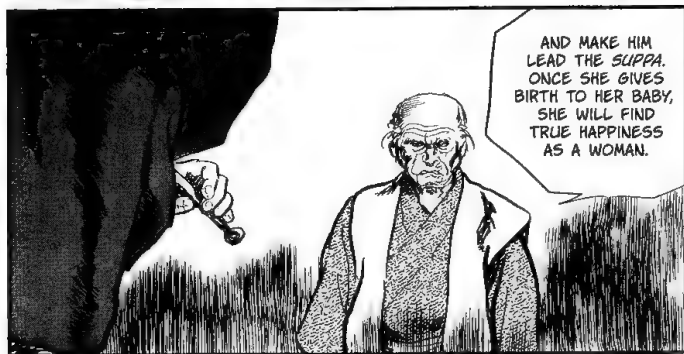
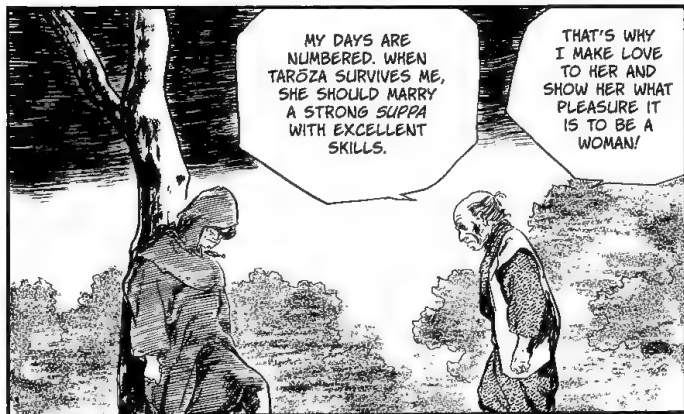


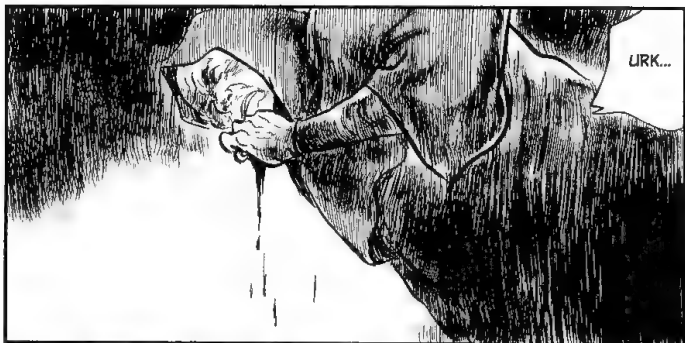
YOU
THINK AS
SHINGEN'S
VASSAL!

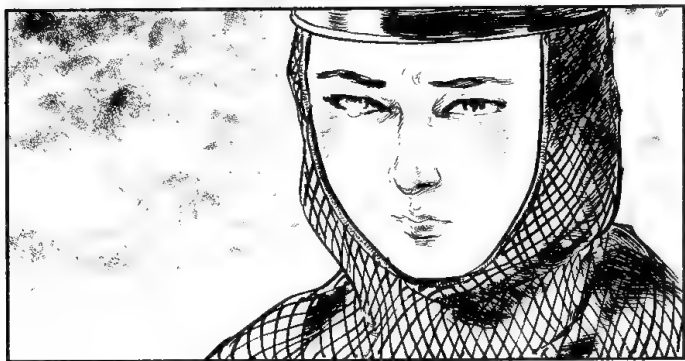
SATORI,
THE WAY
YOU
THINK IS
WRONG.

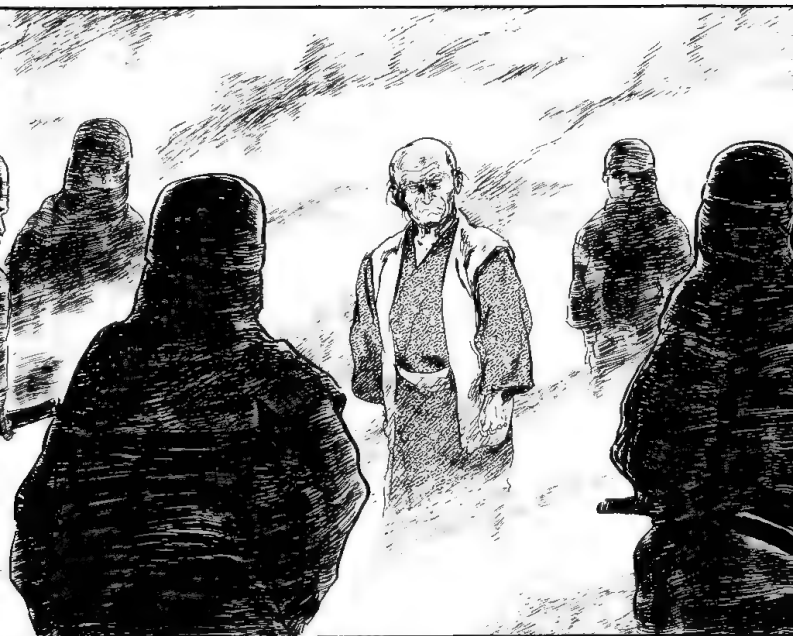


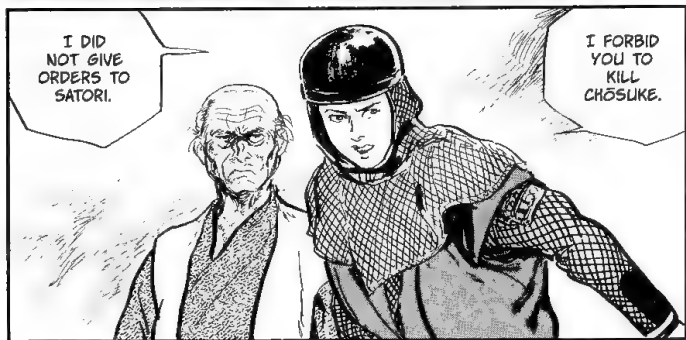
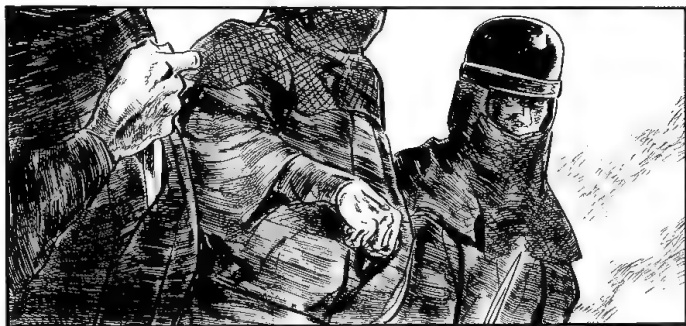
CHŌ...
CHŌ-
SUKE...



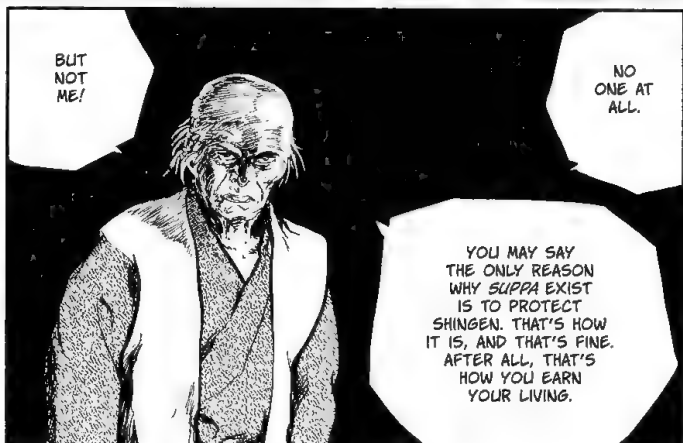


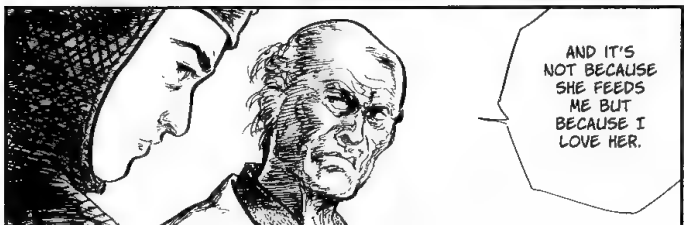














WHAT FOOL
WOULD COME
ALONG JUST TO
THROW AWAY
HIS LIFE? I
COULD'VE STAYED
BEHIND AND
HAD AN EASY
TIME, YOU
KNOW.

I'VE COME
ALONG
BECAUSE I
ADORE HER
ENOUGH TO
THROW MY
LIFE AWAY.



BECAUSE
I LOVE
HER, I'M
STAYING
WITH HER
WHEREVER
SHE
GOES!



WHAT'S WRONG
WITH LOVING YOUR
LEADER AND BEING
WILLING TO THROW
AWAY MY LIFE
TO PROTECT
HER?

WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH
THAT?!





BUT
THEY LET
HANZŌ
INSIDE,
WITHOUT
KNOWING
HE'D COME
AS AN
ASSASSIN.

TAKEDA
SUPPA
WERE TO
SET A
KEKKAI
BARRIER FOR
SHINGEN'S
PROTECTION.

INDEED,
THIS TIME
HANZŌ'S
WORK WAS
ALMOST
DIVINE.

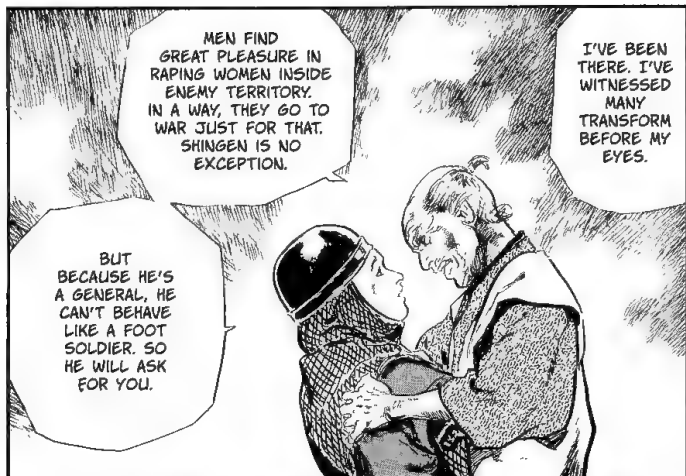


WAR TURNS
MEN INTO
BEASTS. IT
IGNITES
THEIR
BLOOD.



LISTEN,
TARŌZA. I
MIGHT
MURDER
SHINGEN.







HE MEANT IT. HE
TRULY CARED
ABOUT TARŌZA. HE
HONESTLY WANTED
HER TO LIVE AS
A WOMAN AND BE
HAPPY. IT WAS
FROM HIS SINCERE
HEART THAT HANZŌ
UTTERED THOSE
WORDS.



BEFORE THE SUN
ROSE THAT DAY,
TAKEDA SHINGEN
TOOK THE FIELD.
WITH HIS PERFECT
PREPARATIONS AND
HIS INVINCIBLE
ARMIES, HE SET
OUT TO MARCH
ON THE CAPITAL.

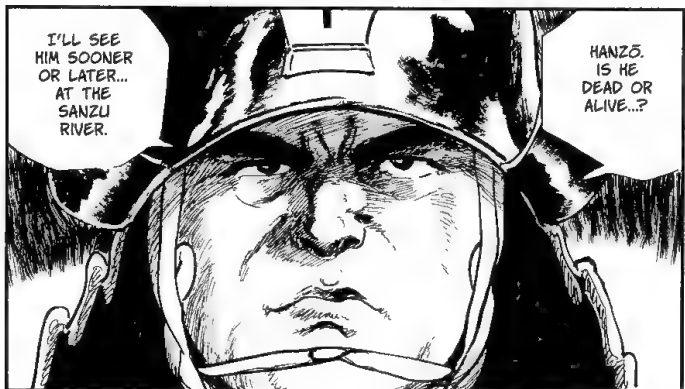


NOBUNAGA
COULD NOT
TAKE ANY
ACTION. IT WAS
AS THOUGH
THE WHOLE
COUNTRY WAS
IN THE PALM
OF SHINGEN'S
HAND.

風動如林
徐不

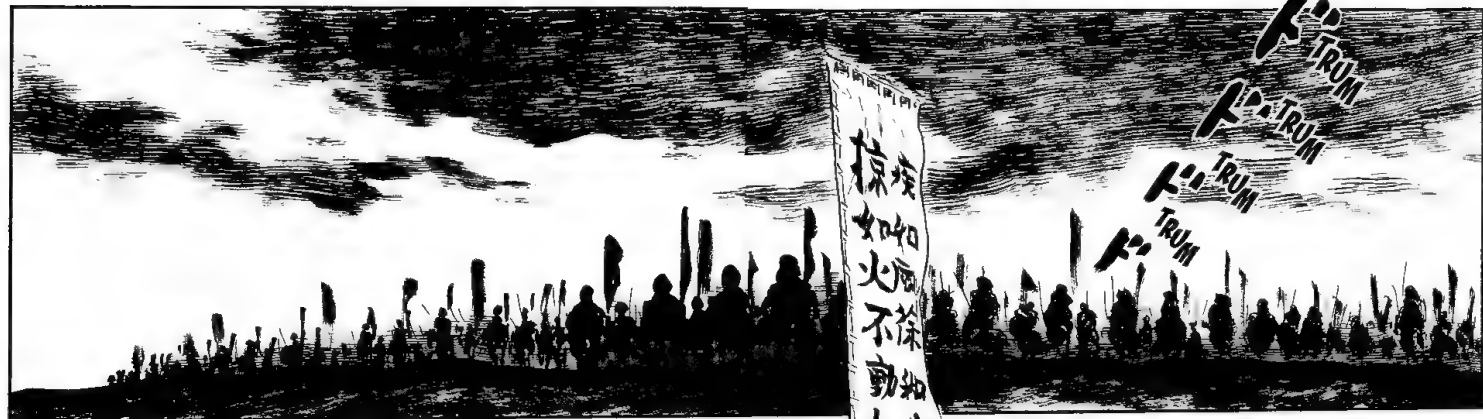
ONLY IEYASU
STOOD IN
SHINGEN'S
WAY TO THE
WEST.

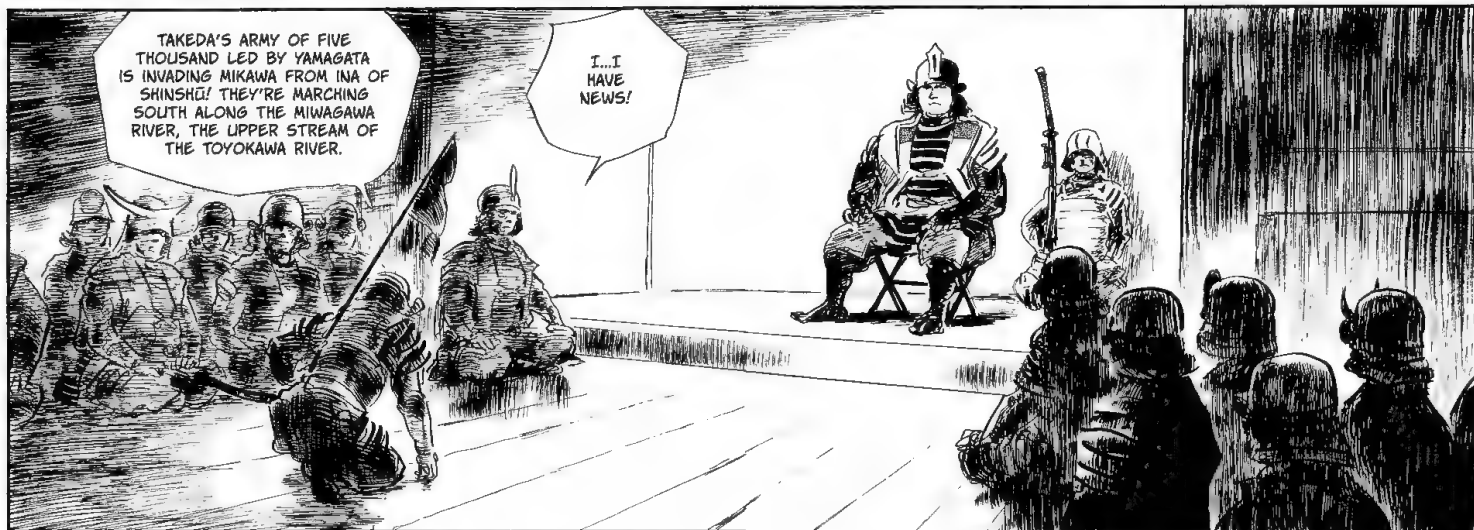
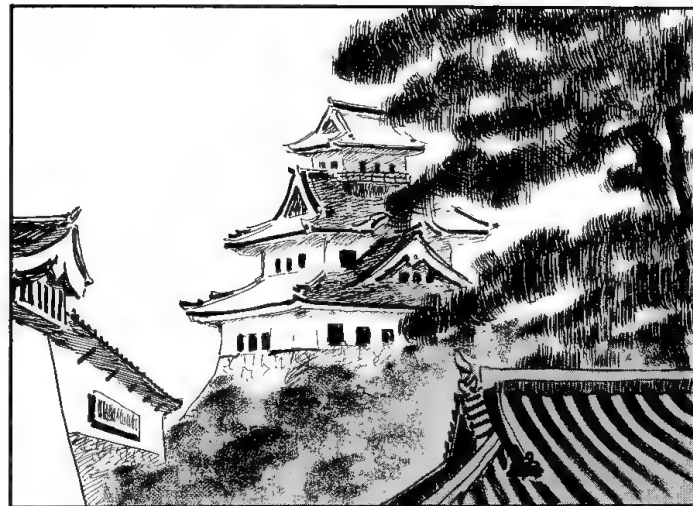
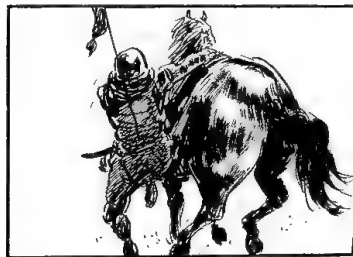


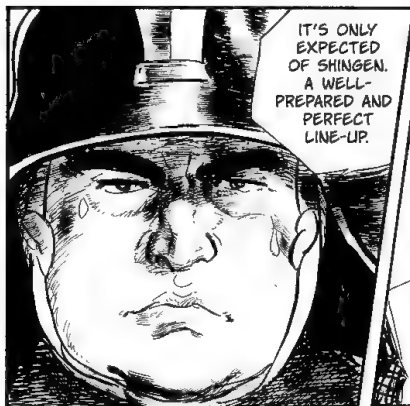


南無誦方南宮法









IT'S ONLY
EXPECTED
OF SHINGEN.
A WELL-
PREPARED AND
PERFECT
LINE-UP.



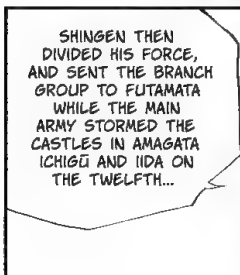
MMGH. I
BET THEIR PLAN
IS TO JOIN
THEIR MAIN ARMY
NEAR OUR
POSITION
HERE IN
HAMAMATSU.



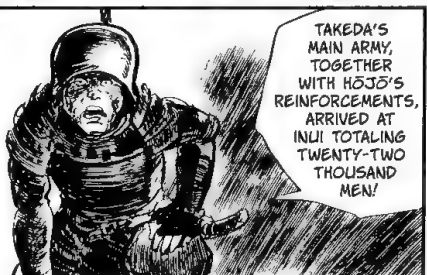
I HAVE
A
REPORT,
SIR!



I
HAVE
NEWS!



SHINGEN THEN
DIVIDED HIS FORCE,
AND SENT THE BRANCH
GROUP TO FUTAMATA
WHILE THE MAIN
ARMY STORMED THE
CASTLES IN AMAGATA
ICHIGŪ AND IIDA ON
THE TWELFTH...



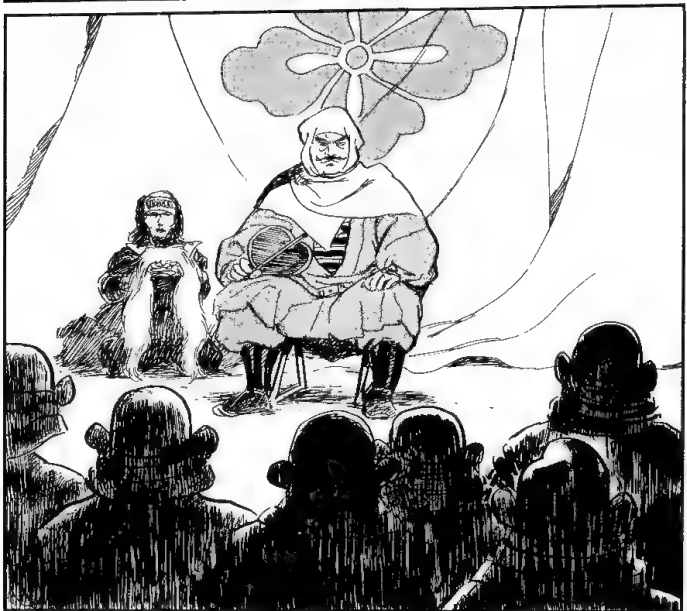
TAKEDA'S
MAIN ARMY,
TOGETHER
WITH HŌJŌ'S
REINFORCEMENTS,
ARRIVED AT
INUJI TOTALING
TWENTY-TWO
THOUSAND
MEN!



















WHAT'S TABOO
DURING WAR,
HOWEVER, IS TO DO
THINGS IN HALVES!
AT ALL TIMES AND
PLACES, THE LOSER
IS THE ONE WHO
DOES THINGS IN
HALVES, NO MATTER
WHAT TACTIC HE
MAY EMPLOY.

I BET HE SAW OUR LINE-
UP AND NOTED THE TERRAIN.
IF THERE'S ANY OPENING, HE
CAN CHARGE WITH THREE
THOUSAND AS HIS ADVANCE
GUARD AND GO FOR AN OPEN
BATTLE. BUT IF THERE'S NO
OPPORTUNITY, HE CAN PULL
BACK ANY TIME. THAT'S
PROBABLY WHAT HE
HAS IN MIND.



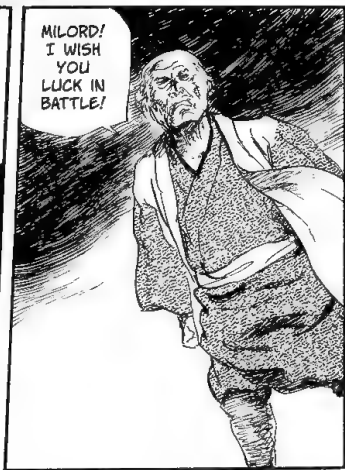
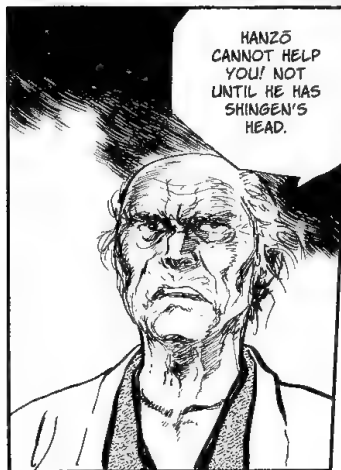
YES SIR!



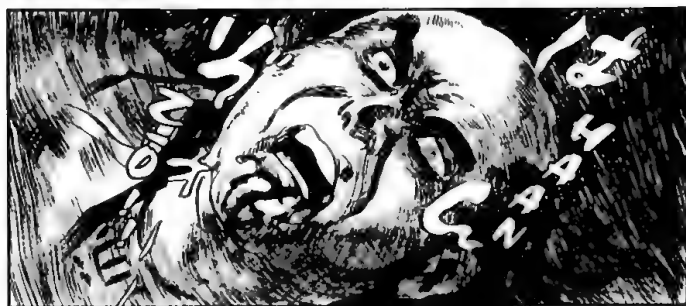
NOBUTOYO, TAKE
YOUR TROOPS TO
MIKANO! BAISETSU,
YOU GO FROM
KIHARA TO
NISHIJIMA!
NOBUSHIGE,
YOU CUT
OFF IEYASU'S
ESCAPE PATH AT
HITOKO-
TOZAKA!



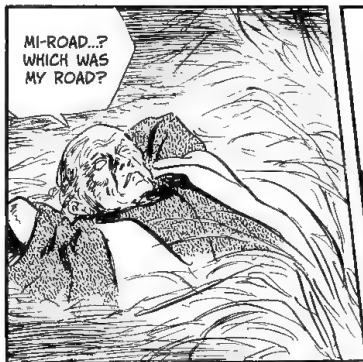
IEYASU. SO
YOU'RE TAKING THE
TROUBLE TO DELIVER
YOUR HEAD TO ME?
DON'T YOU KNOW
HOW FAST
I AM?



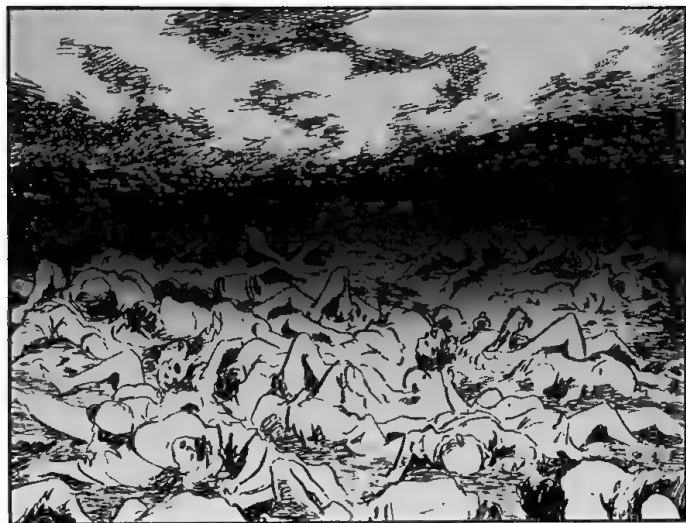














HURRY UP
AND GO! WHICH
IS MY ROAD?
THEY WERE ALL
YELLING

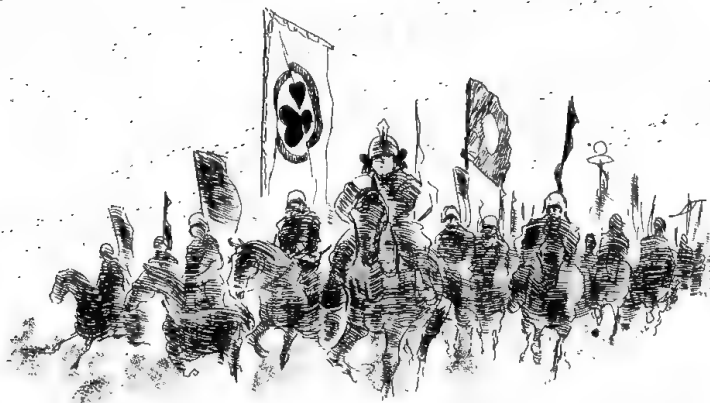
THERE WAS
A CROWD
OF DEAD
AS FAR AS
I COULD
SEE

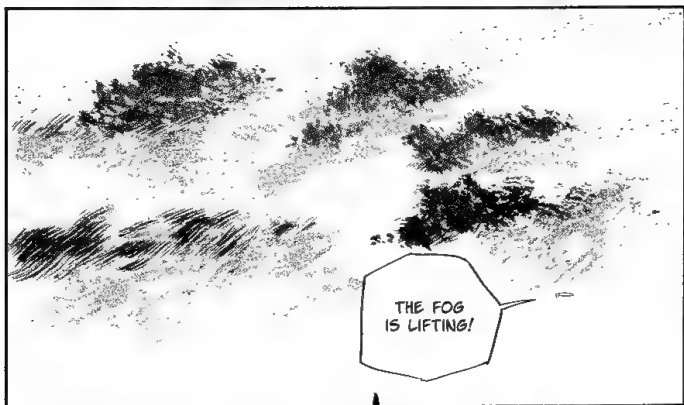
WHICH IS
MY ROAD?
WHICH IS
MY ROAD?

INCLUDING
MYSELF
IT WAS A
HAIR RAISING
EXPERIENCE

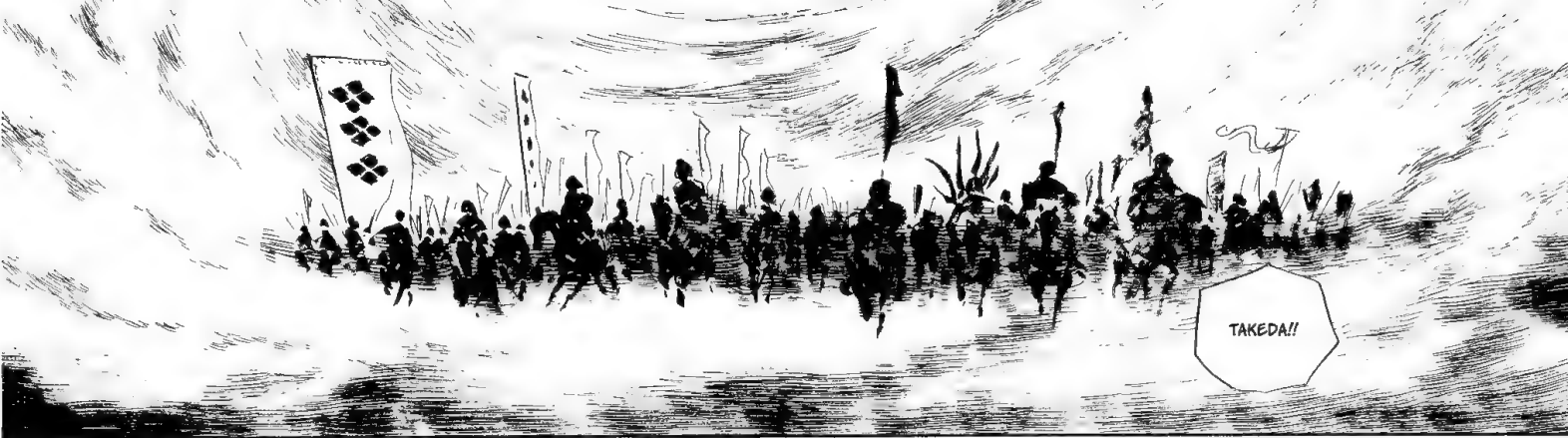
I SHUDDERED
I WASN'T
AFRAID I JUST
PIED THOSE
LOST SOULS

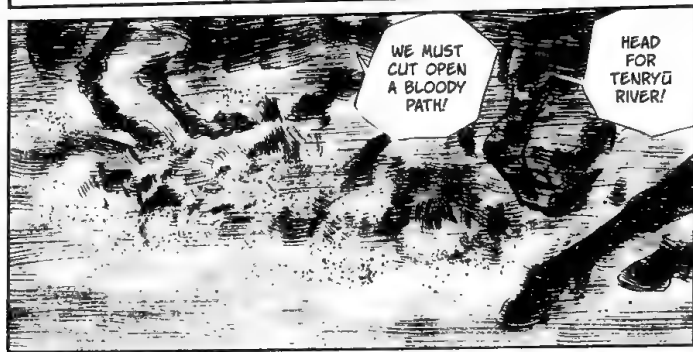


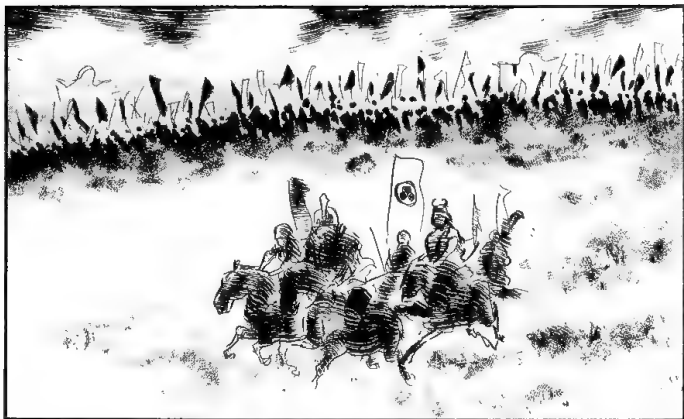














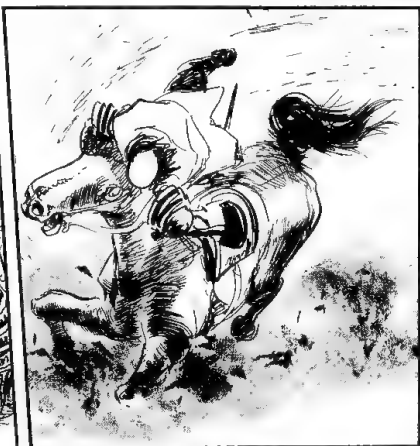
MILORD!
LEAVE THE
REST TO ME!

GET
SHELTER
IN
MITSUKE!

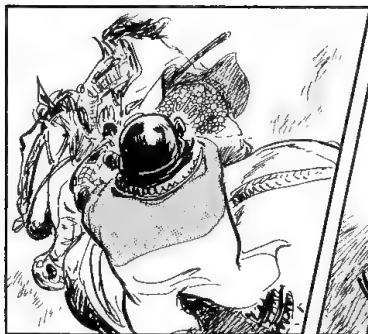


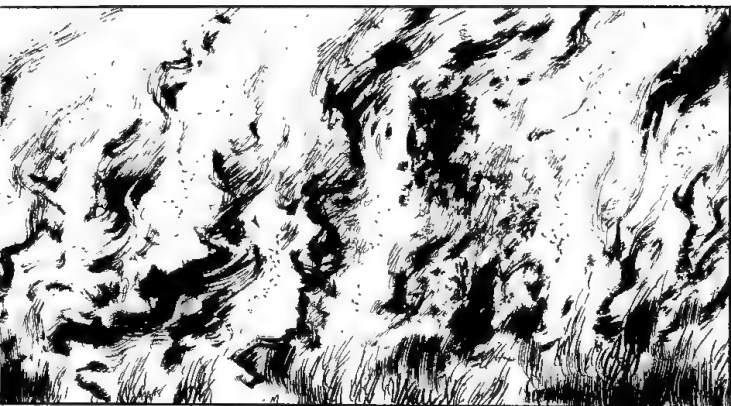
WHERE
ARE
YOU?!!

HANZŌ!

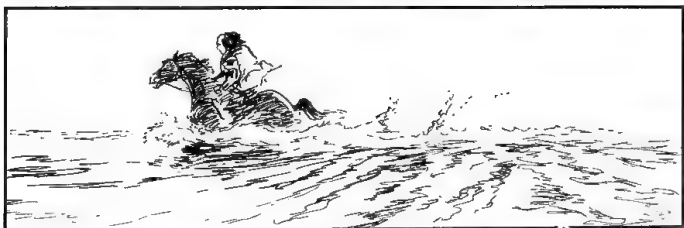


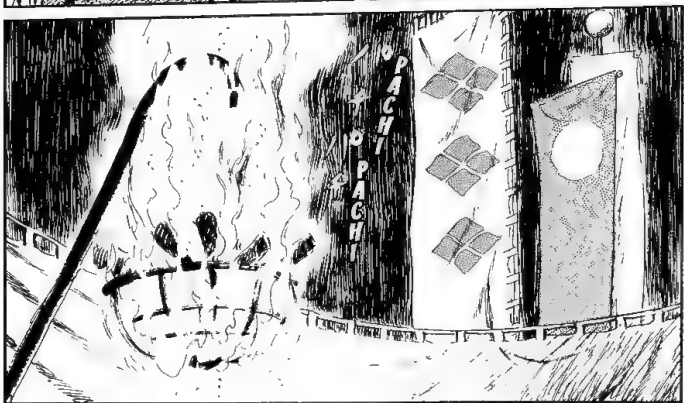














Y...YOU
PROMISED...
YOU
WOULDN'T...
PLEASE
DON'T...



I DID NOT BRING
MY ARMY TO FIGHT
IEYASU. MY GOAL
IS TO CONQUER THE
CENTER TO RULE.



THE PROMISE
WAS TO BE
KEPT IN TIMES
OF PEACE.
WE'RE AT
WAR NOW.

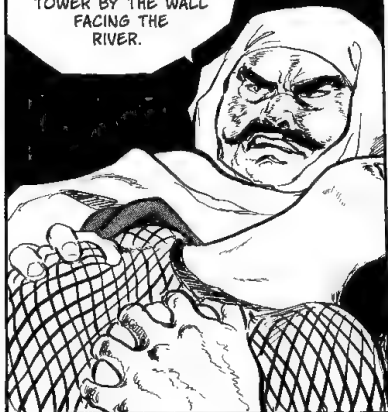
UR...

ONCE WE TAKE
OVER FUTAMATA CASTLE
AND FIRM UP OUR REAR,
I WANT TO CROSS
TENRYŪ RIVER AND COME
OUT AT MIKATAGAHARA.
BUT IEYASU IS LIKELY
TO STRIKE US THERE,
HOPING FOR
A DECISIVE
BATTLE.

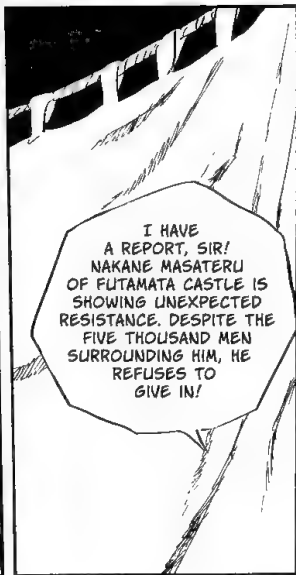
AND YET,
IEYASU STANDS IN
MY PATH. HE SHOULD'VE
SHUT HIMSELF UP INSIDE
HIKUMA CASTLE AND
STAYED PUT. I WOULD
NOT HAVE STOPPED
BY ALONG
THE WAY.

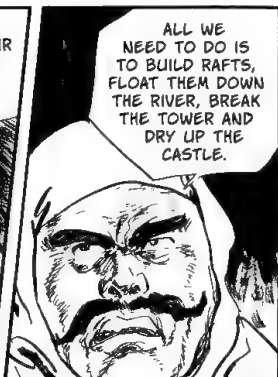


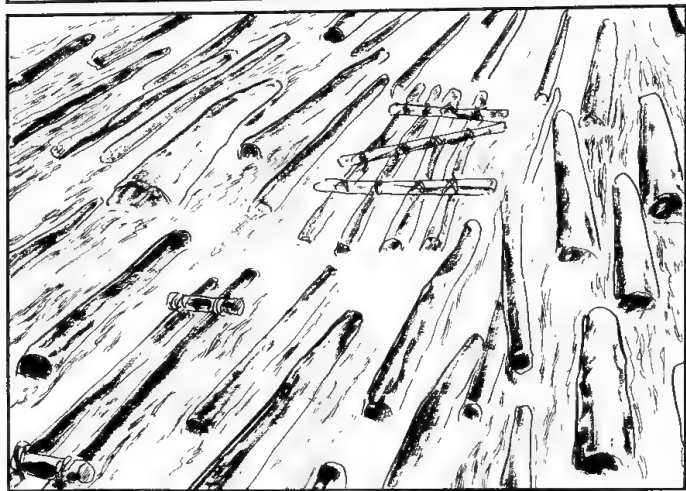
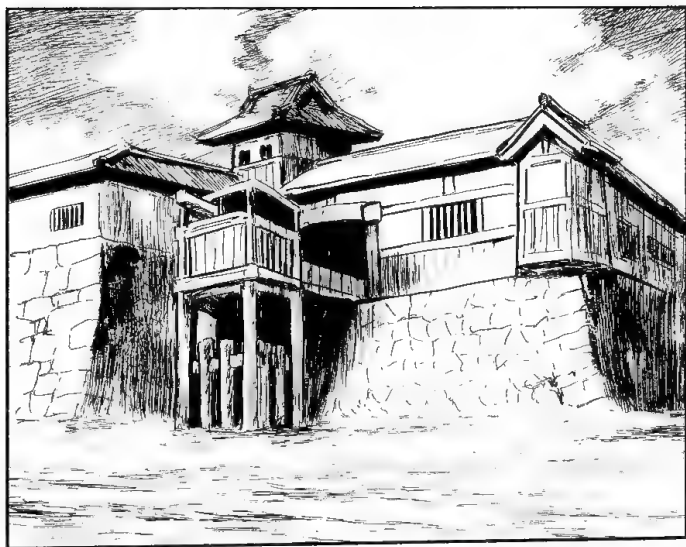
KATSUYORI DOESN'T
THINK INDEED. OUR
SPIES HAVE REPORTED
HOW FUTAMATA CASTLE
GETS DRINKING WATER
FROM TENRYŪ RIVER.
THEY HAVE A WELL
TOWER BY THE WALL
FACING THE
RIVER.

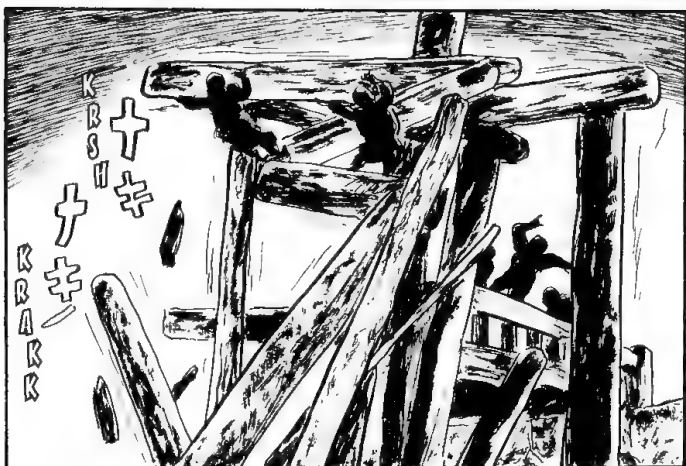


I HAVE
A REPORT, SIR!
NAKANE MASATERU
OF FUTAMATA CASTLE IS
SHOWING UNEXPECTED
RESISTANCE. DESPITE THE
FIVE THOUSAND MEN
SURROUNDING HIM, HE
REFUSES TO
GIVE IN!

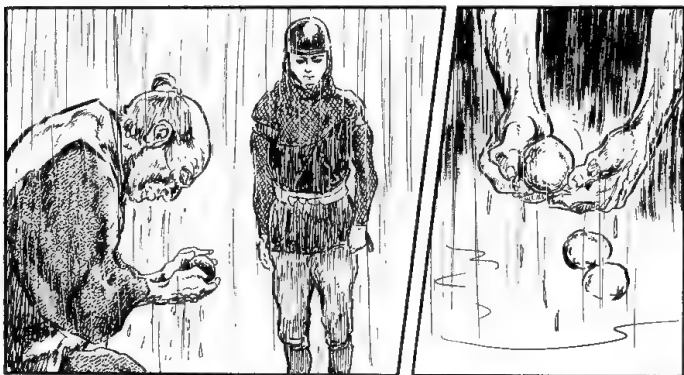


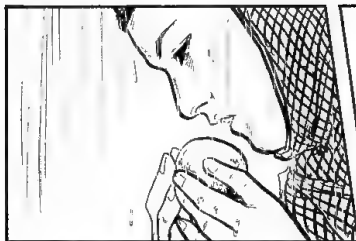






















TO HOLD
TIGHT IN THE
CASTLE AND
WAIT FOR THE
WIND CALLED
TAKEDA
TO BLOW
PAST!



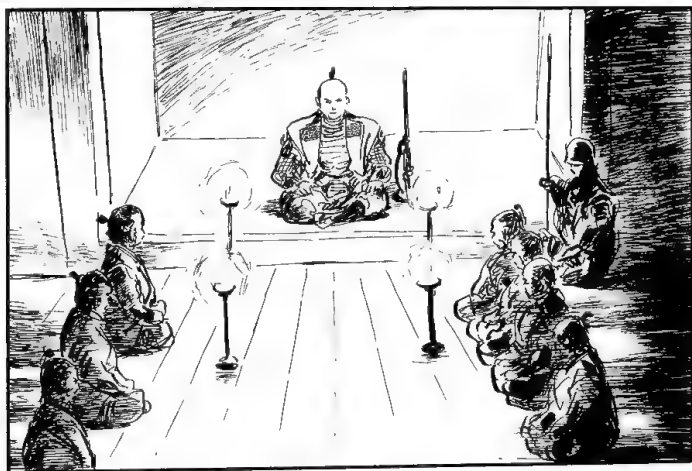
NOBUNAGA HAS NO
INTENTION OF FIGHTING
ME HEAD-ON RIGHT NOW.
THE REINFORCEMENTS HE
SENT ARE NO MORE THAN
A TOKEN. SAKUMA AND
THE OTHERS WERE
SENT ONLY TO
APPEASE
IEYASU!

NEVER-
THELESS...



NOBUNAGA KNOWS
I WOULD SIMPLY
MARCH ON, PAYING NO
ATTENTION TO HIKUMA
CASTLE, SO LONG AS
IEYASU DOESN'T BARE
HIS FANGS AND
STAND IN THE
WAY.





HE
THINKS IT'S
A CRISIS
SITUATION
FOR YOU,
SIR.

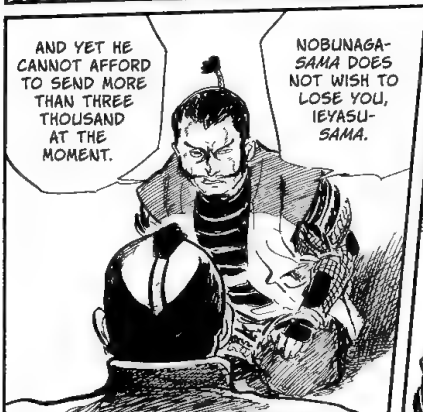


NOBUNAGA-
SAMA DOES NOT
WISH YOU,
IEYASU-SAMA,
TO FIGHT
SHINGEN RIGHT
NOW.



IT'S BEST TO
ENDURE AND LET
THE STORM PASS
THROUGH FOR THE
TIME BEING. LET'S
JUST WAIT, AND
WE CAN RALLY
IN THE
FUTURE.

IF YOU FIGHT TAKEDA
NOW, YOUR CHANCE OF
VICTORY IS ALMOST NIL.
IEYASU-SAMA, WHAT IF
YOU END UP GETTING
KILLED? NOBUNAGA-
SAMA WILL BE DRIVEN
FURTHER INTO A
CORNER, AND THE
ODA-TOKUGAWA
ALLIANCE WILL BE
DESTROYED.

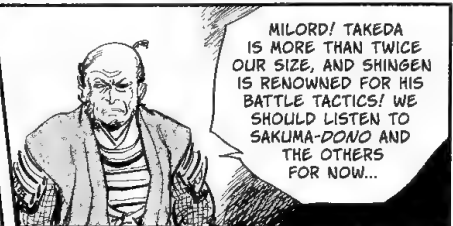
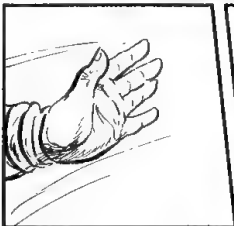


AND YET HE
CANNOT AFFORD
TO SEND MORE
THAN THREE
THOUSAND
AT THE
MOMENT.

NOBUNAGA-
SAMA DOES
NOT WISH TO
LOSE YOU,
IEYASU-
SAMA.



EVEN IF WE HAND
OVER THE CENTER TO
TAKEDA, ONCE THE ODA-
TOKUGAWA ALLIANCE
GATHERS ALL OUR FORCES
AND CHALLENGES
SHINGEN HEAD-ON, WE
WILL SEIZE GLORY
AGAIN.



MILORD! TAKEDA
IS MORE THAN TWICE
OUR SIZE, AND SHINGEN
IS RENOWNED FOR HIS
BATTLE TACTICS! WE
SHOULD LISTEN TO
SAKUMA-DONO AND
THE OTHERS
FOR NOW...

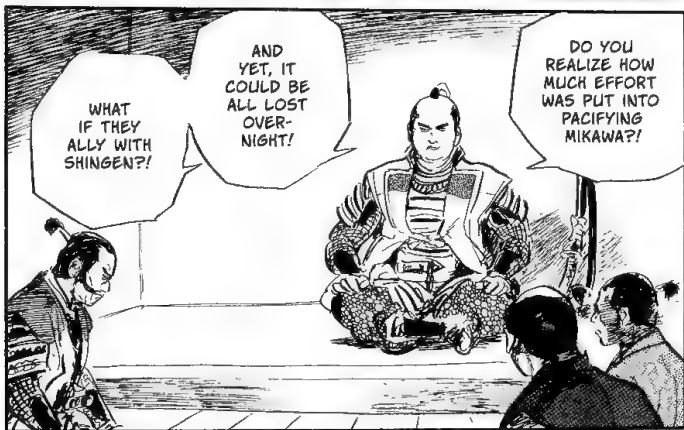
WHAT WORRIES ME
THE MOST AT THE MOMENT
IS, IF I ALLOW SHINGEN TO
PASS THROUGH WITHOUT A
FIGHT, THE POWERFUL CLANS
OF MIKAWA WHO RALLIED
UNDER MY NAME MAY THINK
I'M NOT WORTHY
AND BEGIN TO
BREAK AWAY!



WHAT
IF THEY
ALLY WITH
SHINGEN?!

AND
YET, IT
COULD BE
ALL LOST
OVER-
NIGHT!

DO YOU
REALIZE HOW
MUCH EFFORT
WAS PUT INTO
PACIFYING
MIKAWA?!



IF
I WATCH
HIM DO THAT
IN SILENCE,
I WILL BECOME
THE LAUGHING-
STOCK OF THE
NATION!

SHINGEN
IS PASSING
THROUGH OUR
TERRITORY,
LEADING
A MASSIVE
ARMY.



SHINGEN
OR NOT,
I WILL
NOT
LET THEM
PASS!!

EARLY
TOMORROW
MORNING,
WE WILL
PUSH INTO
MIKATA-
GAHARA!



VICTORY IS
DETERMINED
BY THE
HEAVENS,
NOT BY THE
SIZE
OF THE
ARMY!



HANZŌ...
I TOO WILL
GO OUT TO
MEET MY
DEATH.



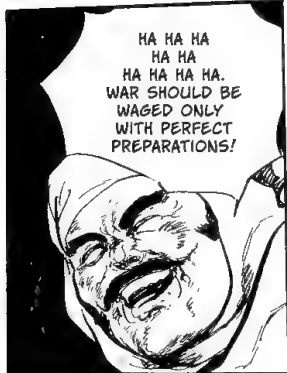


IF HE
DOESN'T, HE HAS
NO FUTURE. HE
CAN ONLY LIVE
A LITTLE
LONGER.

IEYASU
WILL COME.
HE HAS NO
CHOICE.



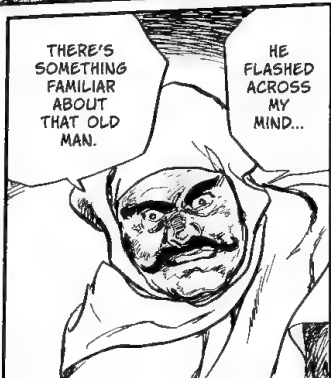
HA HA HA
HA HA
HA HA HA HA.
WAR SHOULD BE
WAGED ONLY
WITH PERFECT
PREPARATIONS!

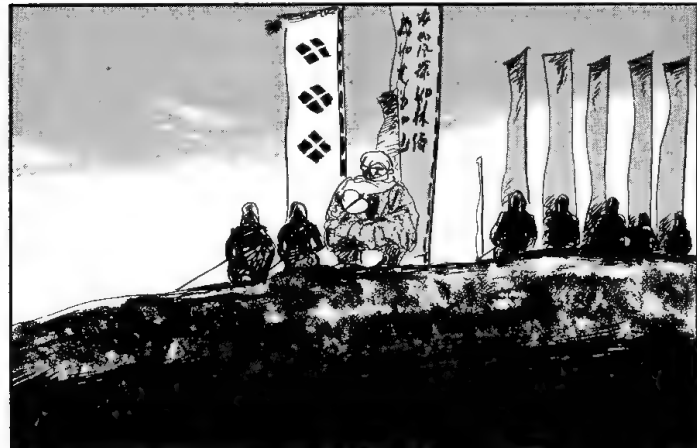
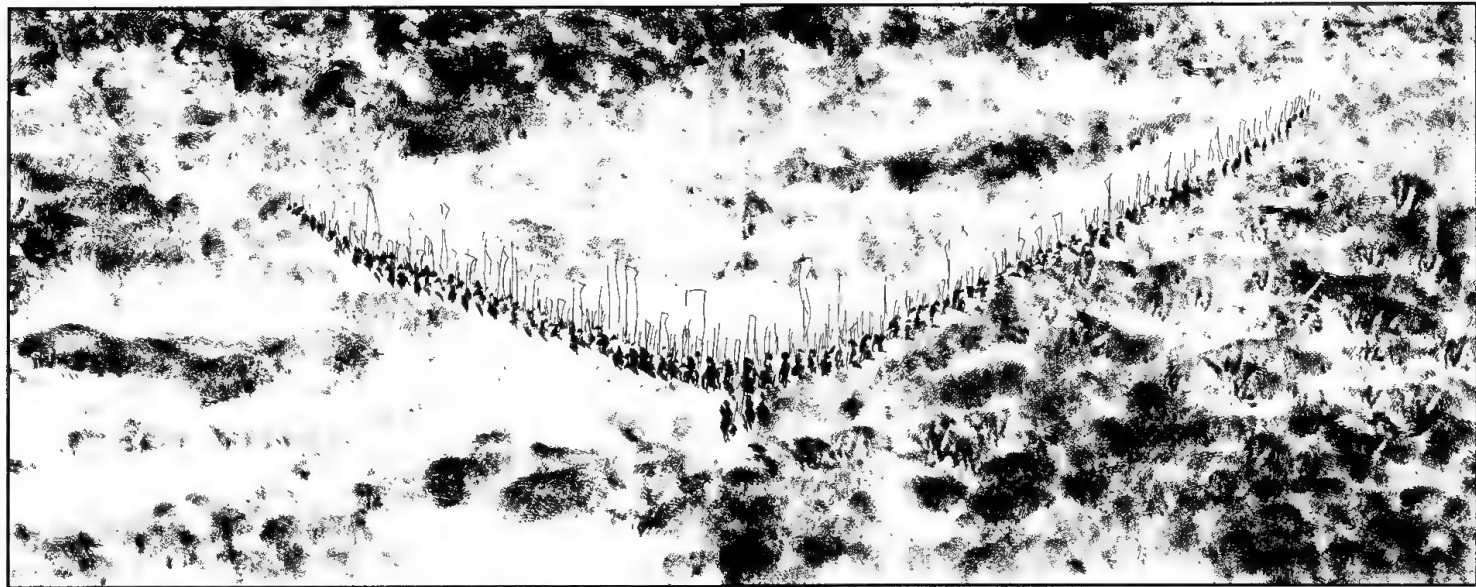


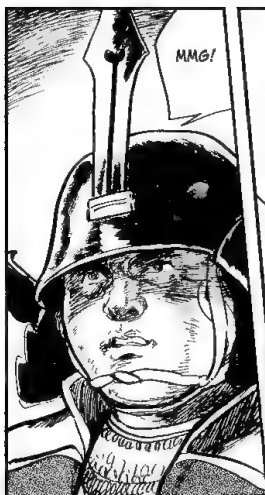
BUT
NOBUNAGA
HAS NO CLUE
ABOUT THE
INTERNAL
SITUATION
OF
MIKAWA.

THE
POWERFUL
CLANS OF
MIKAWA
WILL
DESERT
IEYASU IF
HE'S
WEAK.







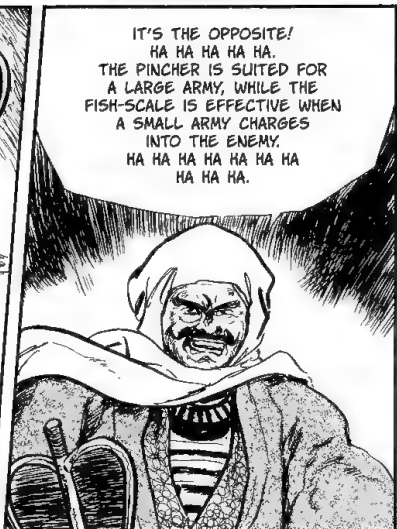


MMG!

THE
ENEMY IS
ADVANCING
IN THE
FISH-SCALE
FORMATION.

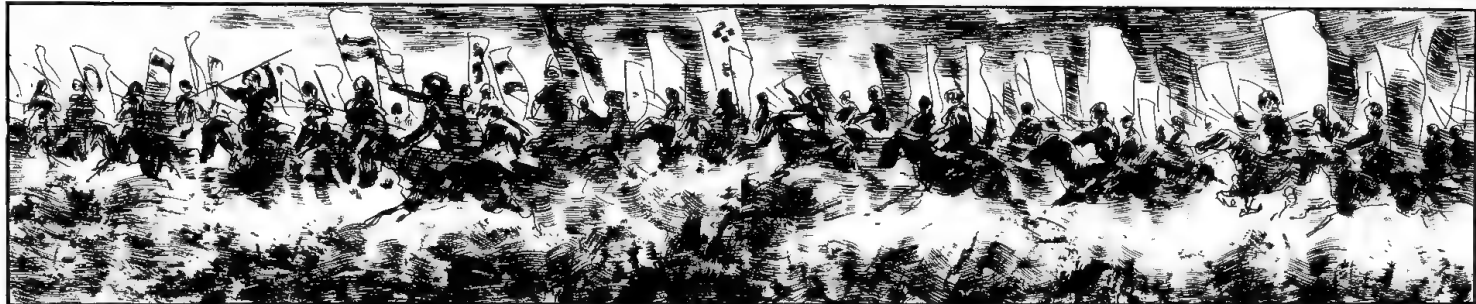


STAY IN
THE FISH-
SCALE
FORMATION
AND ATTACK
ODA!!



IT'S THE OPPOSITE!
HA HA HA HA HA.
THE PINCHER IS SUITED FOR
A LARGE ARMY, WHILE THE
FISH-SCALE IS EFFECTIVE WHEN
A SMALL ARMY CHARGES
INTO THE ENEMY.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA.







ODA'S
REINFORCEMENTS
HAVE NO FIGHT
IN THEM. BE IT
SAKUMA OR TAKIGAWA,
THEY ALL THINK THEY
GOT THE WORST OF
THE DEAL TO BE
SENT HERE.

HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA.



AFTER
THAT, WE'LL
STRIKE
TOKUGAWA
FROM
THE SIDE!

HOPING
TO RETURN
ALIVE WITHOUT
FIGHTING ME AT ALL,
THEY'RE SHRINKING
BACK FROM
THE START.

THAT'S
WHY WE'RE
HITTING THE
ODA FORCES
FIRST!



KATSUYORI
FORCE,
GO!!

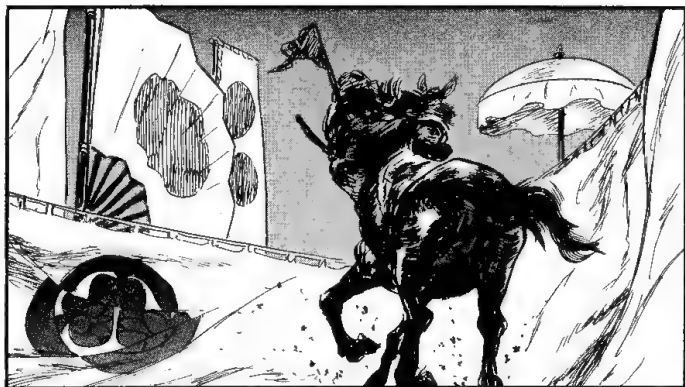


WHY? WHY
DID MILORD
CHOOSE THE
PINCHER
FORMATION?



HE'D HAVE BETTER COMMAND OF HIS ARMY IF IT HAD MOVED TOGETHER INSTEAD OF SPREADING OUT.





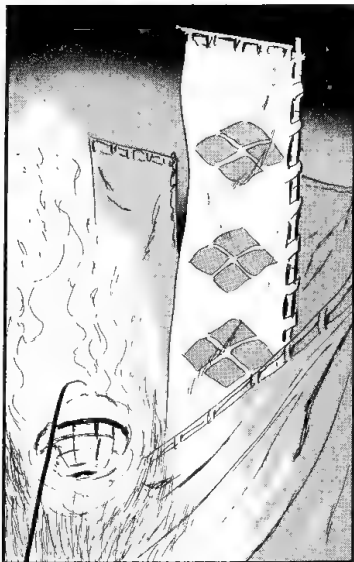




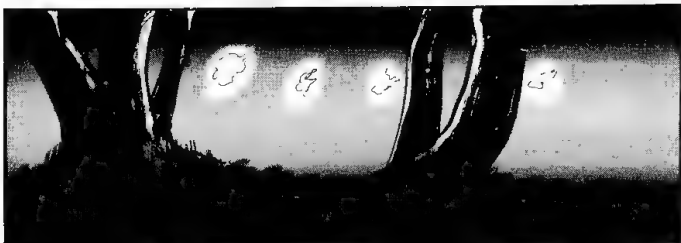


IEYASU
FLED INTO
THE CASTLE
FOR HIS
DEAR LIFE,
HUH?!

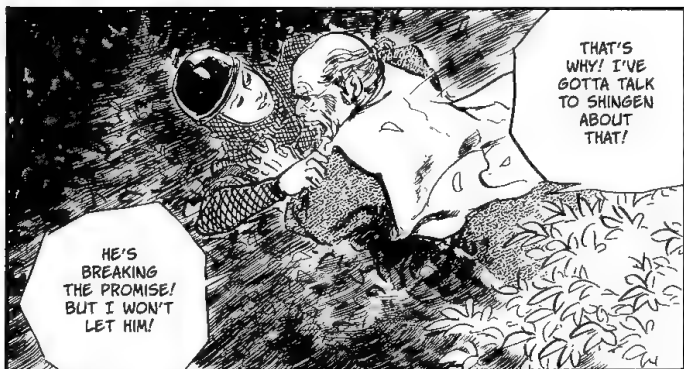
GWA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA.



DO NOT
RELAX! WE'LL
STORM HIKUMA
CASTLE
RIGHT
AWAY!

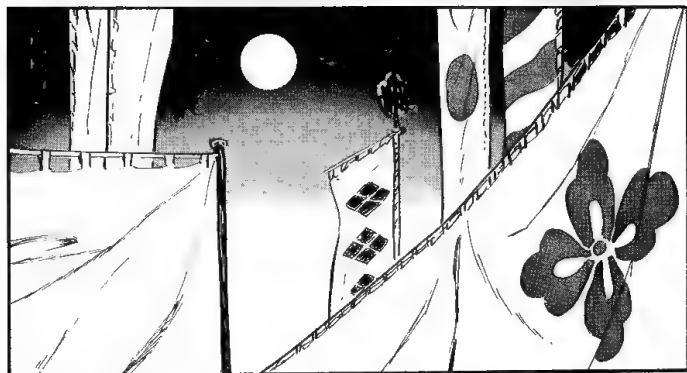




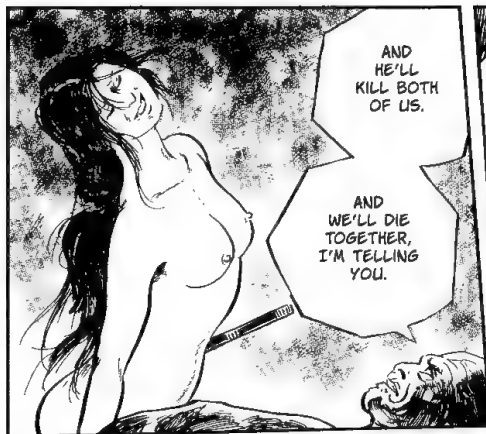


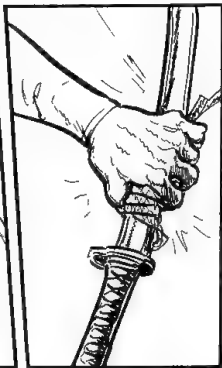


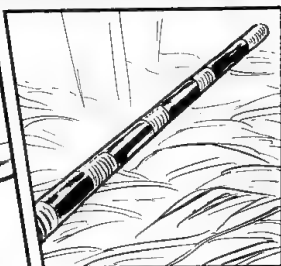
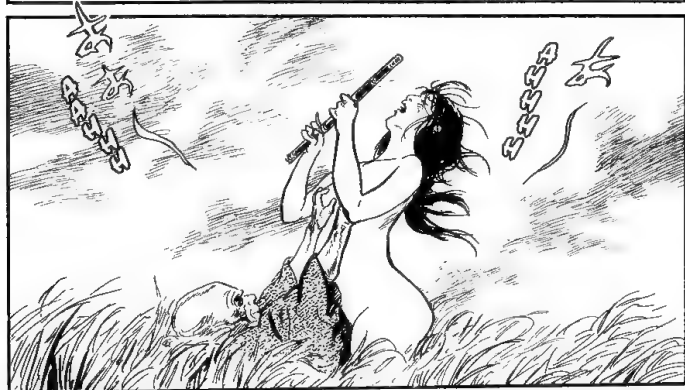


















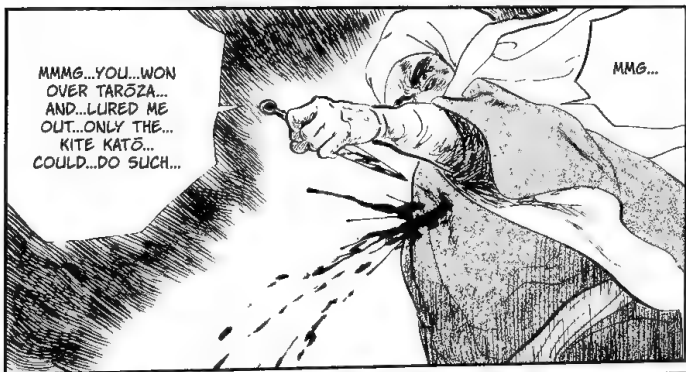
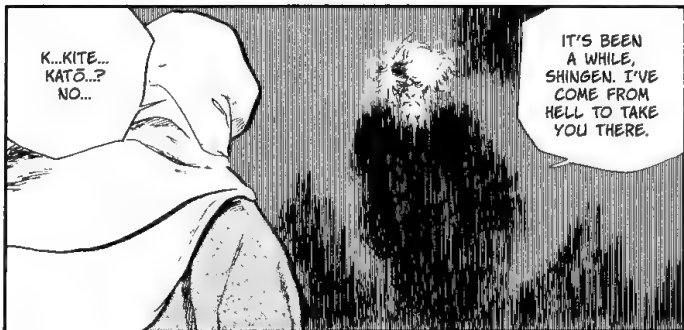


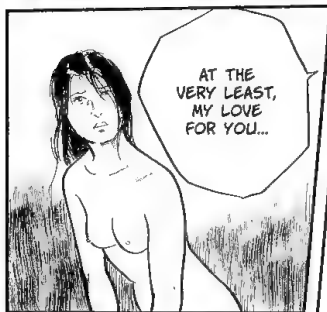
YOU
AREN'T...CH...
CHÔSUKE...
WHO...ARE
YOU?



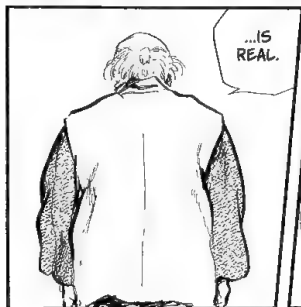
THOSE EYES...
I THOUGHT...
I'VE SEEN
THEM...BEFORE...







AT THE
VERY LEAST,
MY LOVE
FOR YOU...

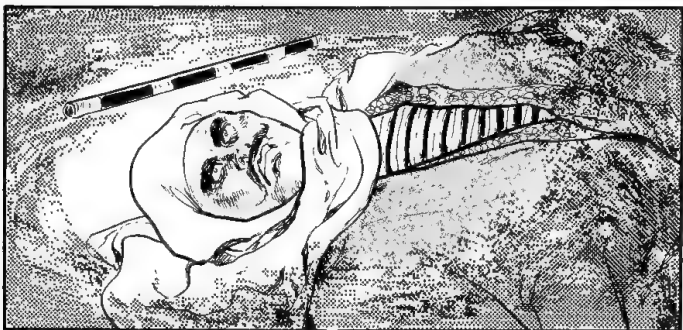


...IS
REAL.

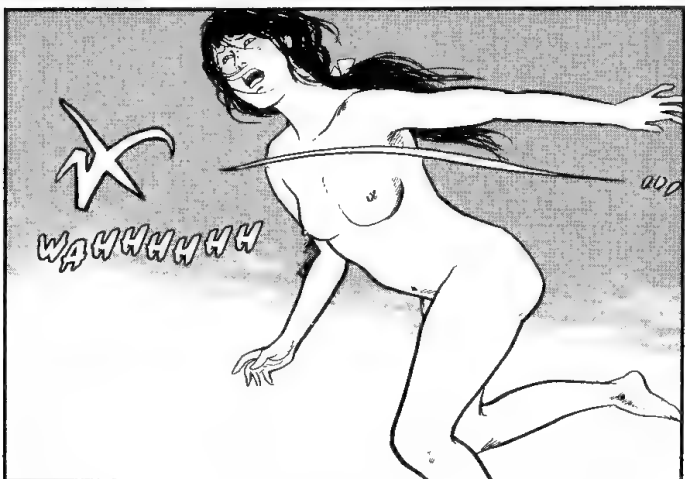


OR COME
WITH ME
IF YOU
WANT. AT
LEAST...

TARŌZA,
KILL ME IF
YOU WANT!
I WON'T
RESIST.





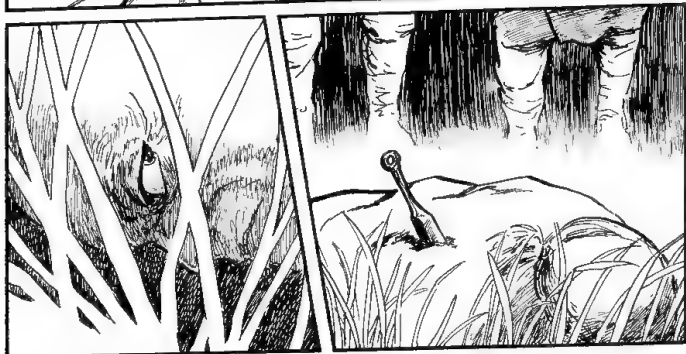












DID YOU TAKE MY
ORDERS ONLY BECAUSE
I WAS OYAKATA-SAMA'S
MISTRESS? WERE
YOU USING ME SIMPLY
TO ENSURE YOUR
CONTINUED EXISTENCE?
JUST BECAUSE I'M
A WOMAN?!

LET'S MAKE
IT CLEAR NOW.
WAS I YOUR
LEADER OR
JUST A WOMAN
TO YOU?











I AM
THE ONE
WHO
KILLED
SHINGEN.



I AM
KITE KATŌ!!
I KILLED
SHINGEN TO
SATISFY MY
GRUDGE!



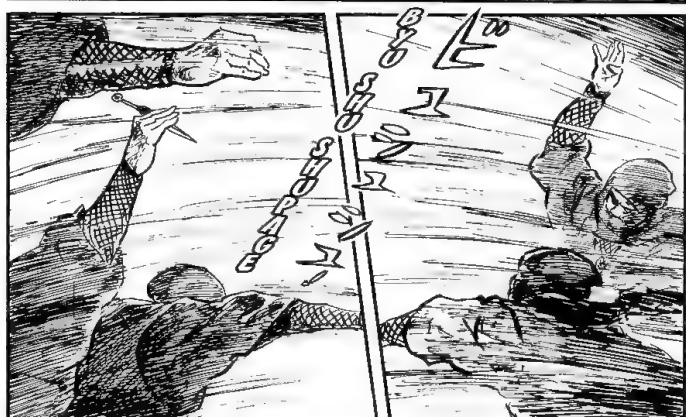
BUT IF
YOU WANT
TO FIGHT,
I HAVE NO
CHOICE.

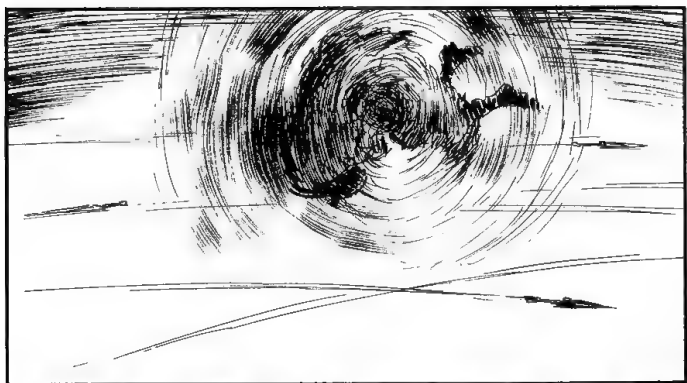
I WAS
GOING TO LET
TARŌZA
HANDLE THIS
SO YOU'D
BE FREE TO
CHOOSE YOUR
FUTURE.

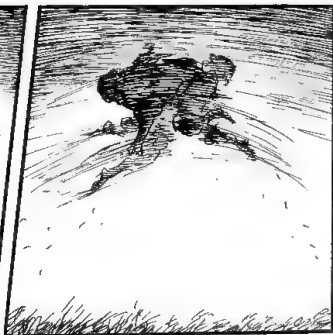
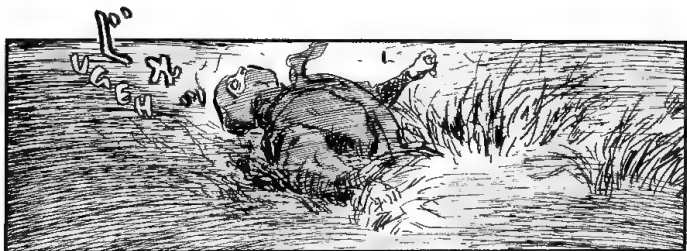


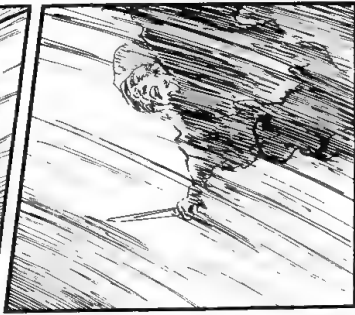
ARE YOU
A SHINOBI
FROM
ODA OR
TOKUGAWA?

WHO...
WHO THE
HELL?!









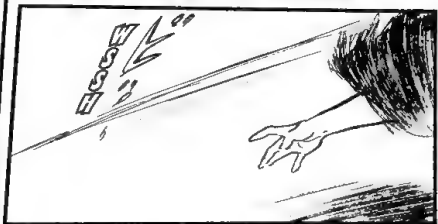
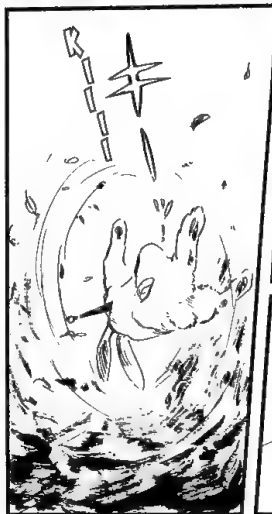


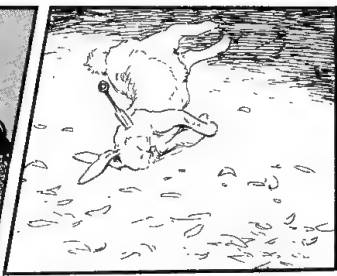


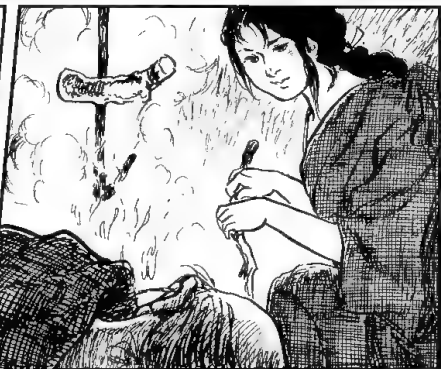
Chapter On
Hikkyō Jiei
No. 2:
Three
Court
Ladies
Part 1

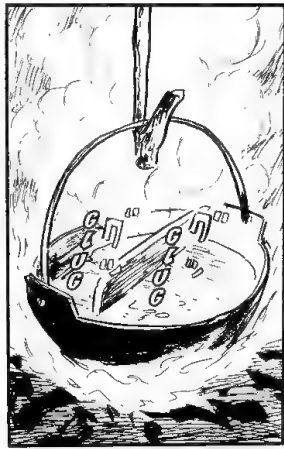




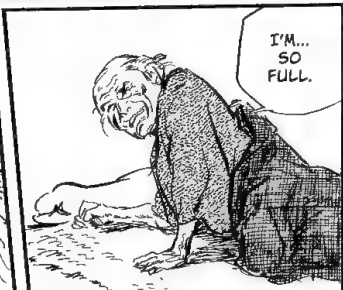
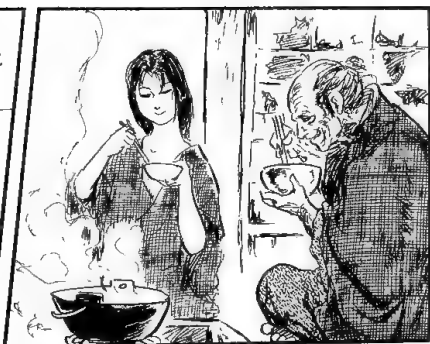


















I AM
NO LONGER
SHINGEN'S
MISTRESS. I'M
NOT YOUR
LEADER,
EITHER.

I'M
A
WOMAN
NOW.

COULD YOU
HAVE POSSIBLY
KILLED FIVE OF
YOUR MEN,
TOO? CHÔSUKE
COULDN'T
HAVE DONE
IT.



I AM
LIVING AS
A WOMAN.
SO DON'T
INTER-
FERE!



WHAT
PLEASURE IT
IS TO BE A
WOMAN. I
AM ALIVE AT
LAST.



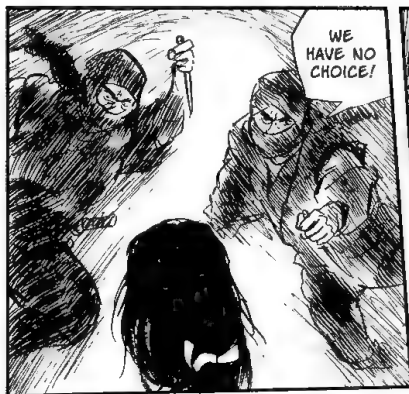
YOU
MADE ME A
MAN. AND YET, YOU
MADE ME SHINGEN'S
MISTRESS, TOO. WHAT
ANGUISH YOU
PUT ME
THROUGH!

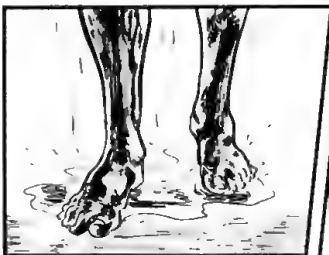
YOU
ARE THE
SELFISH
ONES!



THAT'S
SELFISH!

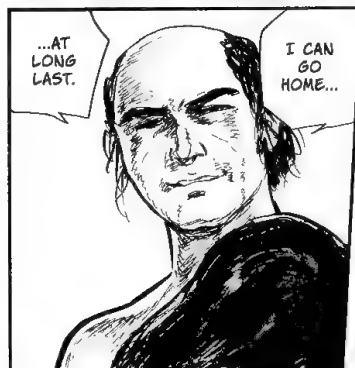
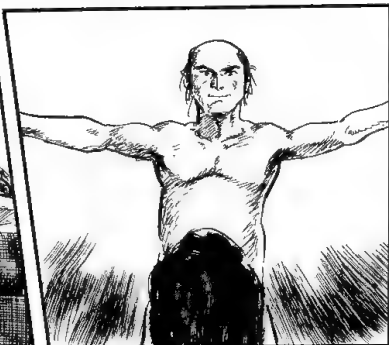
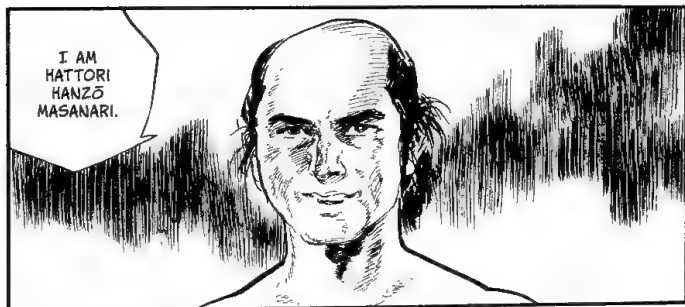
IT'S
NICE!
I'M
HAPPY!

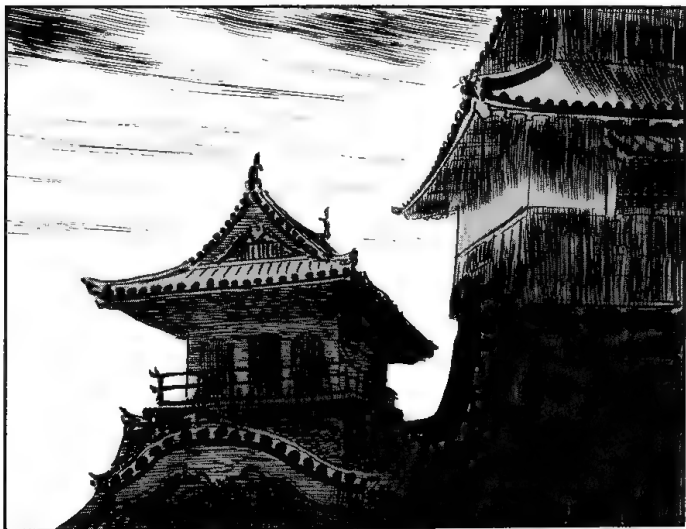






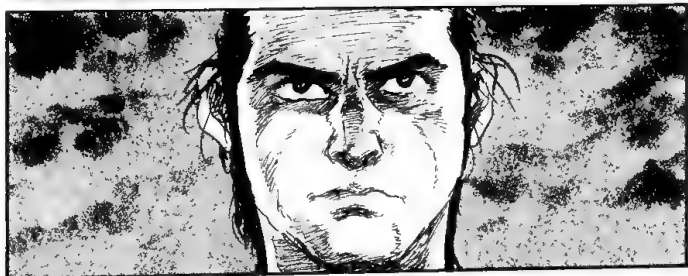






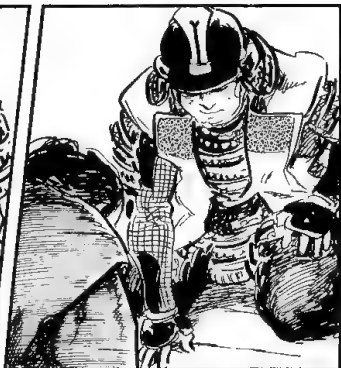










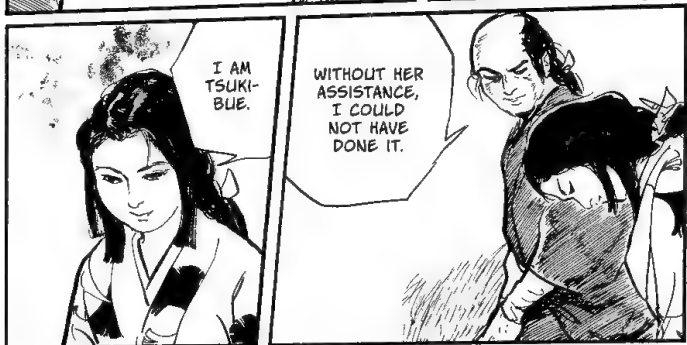


YES,
MILORD.

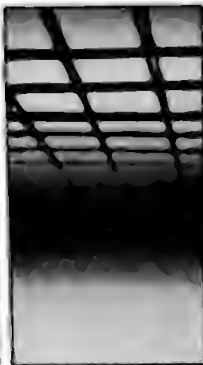
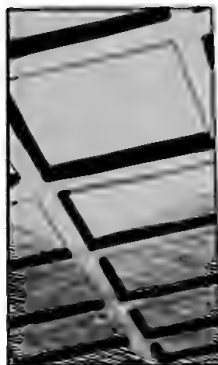
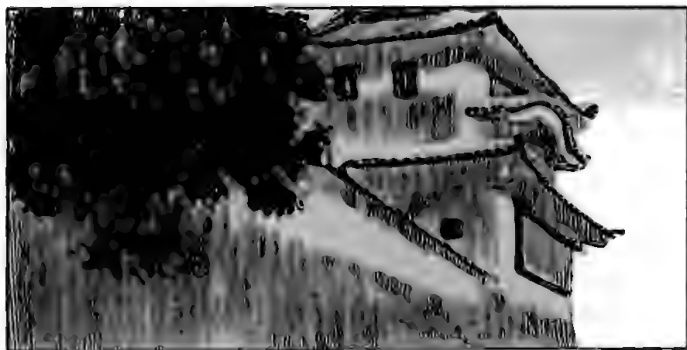
WE
CAN
LIVE.

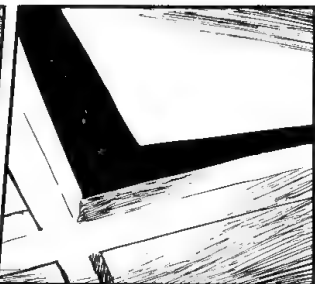
WE
CAN.

WE
CAN
SURVIVE.













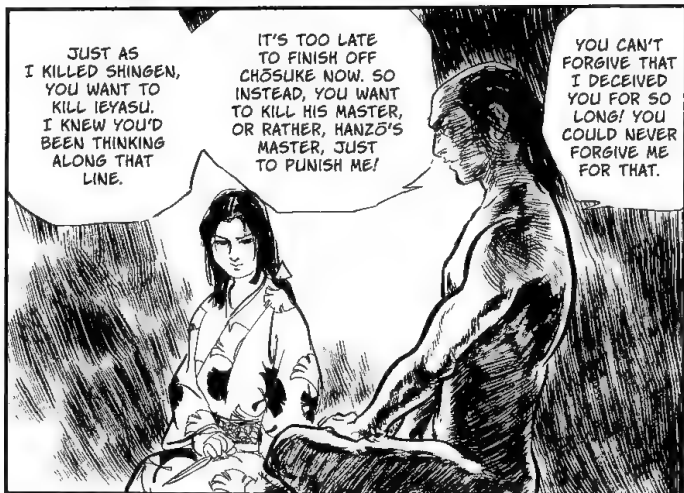
WHAT YOU
CAN'T ACCEPT
IS THAT
CHÔSUKE
TURNED OUT
TO BE
HANZÔ!

THAT
IS, IF
I WAS
CHÔSUKE.

YOU CAN
ACCEPT THE FACT
THAT YOU HAD
TO KILL YOUR
MEN BECAUSE
OF IT.

I KNOW
PAINFULLY
WELL
HOW YOU
FEEL.

YOU CAN
FORGIVE
ME FOR
KILLING
SHINGEN.



JUST AS
I KILLED SHINGEN,
YOU WANT TO
KILL IEYASU.
I KNEW YOU'D
BEEN THINKING
ALONG THAT
LINE.

IT'S TOO LATE
TO FINISH OFF
CHÔSUKE NOW. SO
INSTEAD, YOU WANT
TO KILL HIS MASTER,
OR RATHER, HANZÔ'S
MASTER, JUST
TO PUNISH ME!

YOU CAN'T
FORGIVE THAT
I DECEIVED
YOU FOR SO
LONG! YOU
COULD NEVER
FORGIVE ME
FOR THAT.



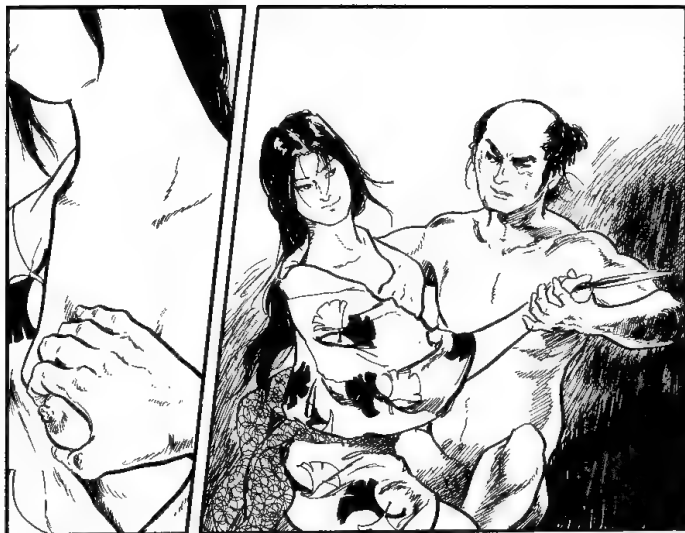


I MUST
BECOME A
DEVIL AND
DEMAND THAT
YOU KILL ME,
KNOWING YOU
WON'T!

I MUST
BECOME
A FIEND.



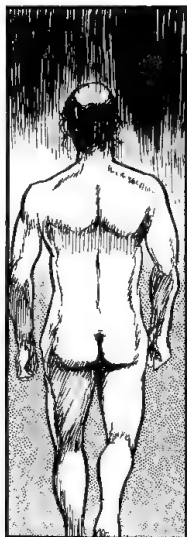
I MUST
BECOME A
DEMON AND
TRAMPLE
ON YOUR
FEELINGS.





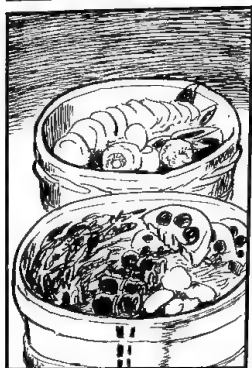




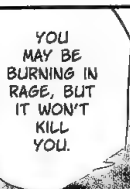


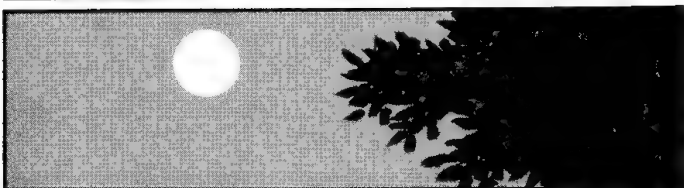
IT WAS
RAINING
ON NEW
YEAR'S
DAY IN
THE 4TH
YEAR OF
GENKI.

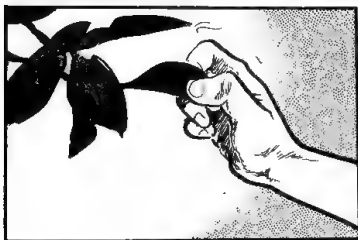








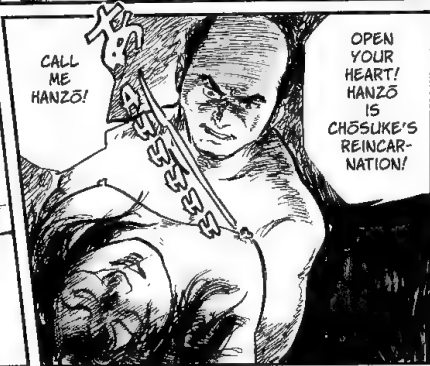












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Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
in association with Soeisha Inc.

Dark Horse Manga
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie OR 97222

www.darkhorse.com

First edition: September 2008
ISBN 978-1-59307-514-9

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Canada

Path of the Assassin Vol. 13: Hateful Burden

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GLOSSARY

Akiyama Nobutomo

(1531–1575) A retainer in the service of the Takeda family who served under Takeda Shingen and Takeda Katsuyori.

Asakura Kagetake

(?–1575) Kagetake served as the grand general during the battle of Anegawa. During the battle at Sakamoto, Kagetake slayed the brother of Nobunaga, Nobuharu, along with a famed officer under Nobunaga, Mori Yoshinari.

ayakashi

A mask used in *noh* theater that represents a vindictive or violent ghost, god, or powerful warrior

daimyō

Feudal lords.

fuchū

A provincial capital; the seat of a local government; a provincial office.

fūrinkazan

Literally, “wind, forest, fire, and mountain.” It was the battle flag used by Takeda Shingen, quoting *The Art of War*: “Move as swift as a wind, stay as silent as the forest, attack fierce like fire, unmovable defense like a mountain.”

guiqulai

From the famous poem of Tao Yuanming, one of the most influential pre Tang dynasty Chinese poets. It translates to “home coming” or “returning home”

Hiraiwa Chikayoshi

(1542–1611) A trusted retainer under Tokugawa Ieyasu. It is known that Chikayoshi was a tutor to the eldest son of Ieyasu, Matsuraide Nobuyasu

Hōjō Ujimasa

(1538–1590) The fourth head of the late Hōjō clan, and *daimyō* of Odawara.

Hōjō Ujiyasu

(1515–1571) The son of Hōjō Ujitsuna and a great *daimyō* of the Odawara Hōjō clan

hōmyō

A Buddhist name. A kind of rank in the Buddhist temple.

Honda Heihachiro Tadakatsu

Also called Honda Heihachirō, he is generally regarded as one of Tokugawa Ieyasu's finest generals, and he fought in almost all of his master's major battles.

honorifics

Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Path of the Assassin*:

dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures

sama – used for superiors. Sometimes spoken as “*saa*”

san – the most common, used among equals or near equals.

sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians.

Igamono

“Men of Iga”

jizamurai

Literally “samurai of the land,” “samurai of the soil.” *Jizamurai* were rural samurai who often lived close to the land and were not entirely removed from the peasantry

Kakegawa

A river that runs through the western part of Shizuoka Prefecture. It is also the name of a city located in Shizuoka prefecture.

Kōfu

A city in Kai Province (today's Yamanashi Prefecture).

Lake Hamana

A lake situated in the western part of Shizuoka Prefecture (formerly Tōtōmi), on the border with Aichi Prefecture.

Mt. Tennō

A mountain facing the Otokoyama (literally, "man's mountain") across the Yodo River. Commanding the routes out of the Kyoto basin, this was a strategically important mountain in military terms and also for transport. Often referred to in popular speech as "Tennozan."

nokizaru

Ninja.

Ōi River

A river in Shizuoka Prefecture. It once formed the border between Tōtōmi and Suruga provinces.

Okudaira Sadakatsu

The son of Okudaira Sadamasa and the father of Okudaira Sadayoshi.

onriedo

The text of a sutra, meaning "Leave the depraved land. Pursue the peaceful world."

oyakata

A term used to address the head of the clan by the clan members. It translates to "house lord."

saisaku

Ninja spy/ninja spies.

Sanzu River

The Japanese Buddhist version of the river Styx.

Sekinen Hachiya

The first son of Ihoro Sekinen, who started the Hachiya clan. Every successor also used the same name, Hachiya Kakubei Sekinen.

Sōshū

Sōshū is another name for Sagami Province.

suppa/shinobi

Ninja.

Suwa clan

The Suwa clan of the Shinano Province had more or less unknown ancestors. Even though this is true, many believe that the Suwa clan is descended from Minamoto Tsunetomo.

Takeda Nobutoyo

A son of Takeda Nobushige, who was a younger brother of Takeda Shingen. In other words, Nobutoyo was Shingen's nephew.

Takeda Yoshinobu

The eldest son and heir of Takeda Shingen.

Takigawa Kazumasu

(1525–1586) A samurai retainer to Oda Nobunaga, and later Toyotomi Hideyoshi, during Japan's Sengoku period.

Tōkai region

A subregion of Chubu, Japan, along the Pacific Ocean. The name comes from Tōkaido, one of the Edo five routes.

Tōtōmi Province

An old province in the area of Japan that is today western Shizuoka Prefecture.

umeboshi

A salty, tart condiment made from pickled Japanese plums.

Yamagata Masakage

(1524–1575) One of the twenty-four generals of the Takeda clan, he was famous for his red armor and skill on the battlefield.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. Art was a Kojima family tradition, his own father an amateur portrait artist and his great-great-grandfather a sculptor.

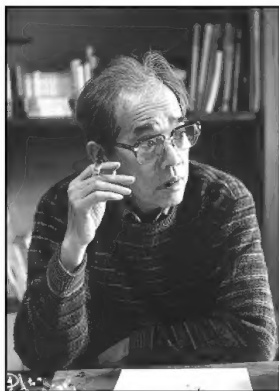
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines just starting to reach the newsstands. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or “paper-play” narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays, and later moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his ninja adventure, *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a

steady stream of popular samurai manga series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Many additional series would follow, including *Path of the Assassin* and *Samurai Executioner*.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, the great Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000, at the age of seventy-one.



KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing such classic manga as *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman*, Koike has hosted the popular *Shibi Golf Weekly* instructional television program; founded the *Albatross View* golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists—such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi—break into the comics field. His methods and teachings continue to influence new generations of manga creators, not to mention artists and writers around the world. Examples of Koike's influence range from the comics works of Frank Miller and Stan Sakai to the films of Quentin Tarantino.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to the character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well-created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

Kazuo Koike continues to work in the entertainment media to this very day, consistently diversifying his work and forging new paths across the rough roads of Edo-period history and the green swaths of today's golfing world.



In the politics, struggles, and battles that lead to the birth of a nation, sometimes even good people must die at the hands of allies. And now it's down to only a few warlords of Edo-era Japan. History already tells the story of the victor, but the real guts of *Path of the Assassin* lies in the characters behind the scenes—the ninja warriors doing the dirty work. Theirs is a story of families and war and intrigue, only far more mysterious and untold.



The Oda-Tokugawa allied forces defeated the Azai-Asakura united forces in the battle of Anegawa. Now, after the death of Hōjō Ujiyasu, Shingen is ready to take the field. "The way things are, Ieyasu will have no future. There is one thing and one thing alone that can save him. Hanzō must murder Shingen." So advised by Takenaka Hanbei, Hanzō transforms himself into an eighty-year-old man and infiltrates the compound of the Takeda *suppa*, who are led by Tsukibue Tarōza. Prepare to witness Hanzō's deceptive artistry pushed to its limit.

*Lifelong Friends, with the
Same Dreams,
Striving to Grow into a
Rising River.*



半蔵の門

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FOR MATURE READERS**